XEROX

Xerox University Microfilms
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

WESTERN AMERICANA

Reproduced from the original in the collection of
THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LIBRARIES

EARLY TIMES

IN

TEXAS.

Jno

BY J. C. DUVAL.

COPYRIGHTED 1892.

H. P. N. GAMMEL & CO., PUBLISHERS,

AUSTIN, TEXAS.

828
D991e

PRINTED AND BOUND
BY
EUGENE VON BOECKMANN,
AUSTIN, TEXAS.

sh-Special
mmel
9-31
2 33

CONTENTS.

EARLY TIMES IN TEXAS.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory—Volunteers for Texas—Down the Mississippi—New Orleans—Out on the Gulf.............. 13

CHAPTER II.

First View of the "Promised Land"—Mustered into Service—Unsuccessful Cruise........................ 18

CHAPTER III.

Leave for Copano—Rendezvous of Lafitte the Pirate—March to Refugio—March to Goliad.............. 23

CHAPTER IV.

Description of Goliad—Tired of Tramping the Boys Mount Mustangs but Dismount very Expeditiously..... 29

CHAPTER V.

Rumors of the Advance of Santa Anna—Massacre of Capt. Grant and his Men—Battle of Refugio and Massacre of Capt. King and his Men—Col. Fannin's Retreat and Fatal Halt in the Prairie................ 35

CHAPTER VI.

Mexican Cavalry surround us on the Prairie—Col. Horton and his Men cut off from us—Retreat of the Enemy.. 40

CHAPTER VII.

Texan Loss in the Coletto Fight—Dismal Night on the Prairie—Capitulation agreed upon—Mexican Loss in the Fight.. 46

CHAPTER VIII.

Major Ward and Battalion brought to Goliad—Also Capt. Miller and men— Marched out in three Divisions—The Massacre—Dobell Escapes........................ 51

CHAPTER IX.

Headed off by a Party of Lancers—Witness the Murder of Five or Six of our men—Execution of Col. Fannin—Wonderful Escape of Wm. Hunter............... 56

CHAPTER X.

Narrow Escape from Lancers—Suffering from Hunger—Lost—Return nearly to Goliad.................... 61

CHAPTER XI.

Great Suffering from Hunger—Reach the Guadalupe River—Indians—Mexican Lion.................. 66

CHAPTER XII.

Mexican Marauders—Brown and myself captured—Attempt to escape—I succeed but Brown is recaptured—Sleep once more under a roof..................... 72

CHAPTER XIII.

Unsuccessful Search for my Companions—I set out again—Trailed by Indians........................ 77

CHAPTER XIV.

Sleep Luxuriously in a bed—Make Another Start—Attempt to Steal a Mexican Soldier's Gun............. 83

CHAPTER XV.

Followed by Wolves—Mexicans and Indians—Indian Camp—Signal Smokes—Lost on the Prairie.......... 88

CHAPTER XVI.

Narrow Escape from Indians—Reach the Colorado River and swim it—Old Caney Creek—Immense Cane Brake—Get into comfortable quarters 94

CHAPTER XVII.

In Clover—Pitching a Tent over a "Den" of Rattlesnakes Followed by "Scout" 100

CHAPTER XVIII.

Camp in Cane Brake—Vain Search for a Road—Narrow Escape from a Party of Lancers.................. 104

CHAPTER XIX.

Return to my Domicil—Another Start—Again in Search of a Road—Night Alarms........................... 111

CHAPTER XX.

I astonish a couple of Mexicans—Return again to my old quarters—Find a Road across the Brake at last—Encounter with two bears............................ 117

CHAPTER XXI.

Bid Farewell to my comfortable quarters—Immense Cane Brake—Dodge a Mexican Soldier, and a Party of Indians.. 122

CHAPTER XXII.

Prairie on Fire—Narrow Escape from Drowning—A Mirage—Mexican Cavalry—Meet with two Spies from the Texan Army and return with them.............. 127

THE YOUNG EXPLORERS.

CHAPTER I.

Leave for Texas again—Find an Old Schoolmate—Agree to go West with him.............................. 1

CHAPTER II.

Stop at an "unhealthy" locality—A party of Comanches pay us a visit—Cayote Ranche.......................... 14

CHAPTER III.

Leave Cayote Ranch—Witness a Race between Tim McGarity, Pat O'Houlihan and a large party of Indians—The Exploring Expedition.......................... 26

CHAPTER IV.

Make the acquaintance of Uncle Seth—He finally agrees to take command of the Exploring party—Leave Frontier Hall.. 46

CHAPTER V.

San Antonio—The Alamo and the old Missions—Bowie and Crockett—Fight between Citizens and Comanches in the Plaza—Riding Match betweed Rangers, Comanches and Rancheros.......................... 64

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. Pitt courts the Muses—Leave the City—Turkey Steaks—A False Alarm........................... 74

CHAPTER VII.

Indian Sign—The "Stampede"—Cudjo disappears in the Row, but turns up unexpectedly.................. 84

CHAPTER VIII.

Cudjo's race with the Javalinas—They tree Henry and myself—Wolves around Camp..... 93

CHAPTER IX.

Off again—Meet a company of Trappers—Indian Hieroglyphics—A vast Drove of Mustangs............... 104

CHAPTER X.

Mr. Pitt tells of his narrow escape from Comanches—The Canyon de Uvalde—The old Mine............ 117

CHAPTER XI.

Mr. Pitt's odorous Yarn—Kill our first Buffalo—The Beaver's Dam—Uncle Seth tells how Bill Shanks, on his little muel, beat his race nag.................. 135

CHAPTER XII.

Reach the Rio Frio—Meet a party of Choctaw Indians Take Dinner with them—Mr. Dobell's Yarn.......... 155

CHAPTER XIII.

Henry and Willie go on a Buffalo Chase with the Choctaws—Indian Rock Tower—Lawrence and I find a huge Nugget.. 177

CHAPTER XIV.

Explore a part of the country on the west branch of Frio —Camp at the Head of the Frio.................... 200

CHAPTER XV.

Indian Sign—Big Drunk's Spies discover a Comanche Camp—Preparing for the Scrimmage................ 213

CHAPTER XVI.

Comanches attack us—Henry and Cudjo wounded—Choctaw killed—Comanches driven off—Return to Frontier Hall—Concluding Remarks................ 226

APPENDIX.

List of Men under the Command of Col. J. W. Fannin in 1835—36.. 243

PREFACE.

Several of my young friends here who have read a little book I published many years ago, entitled "The Adventures of Big Foot Wallace," and were pleased with it, have requested me to write another and tell them whatever I thought would interest them about early times in Texas. In reply I stated to my young friends that I had lived the greater portion of my life on the frontiers, where opportunities for learning and improvement in a literary way, were as few and far between as the settlements, and consequently I did not think I was capable of writing a book that would interest them like those of Mayne Reid and many other popular authors of juvenile works. But my young friends said that boys didn't care much for style or literary merit, that all they wanted was a truthful account of scenes and incidents that had actually occurred, not fictitious ones that never had an existence except in the imagination of the author.

Since then I have come to the conclusion that my young friends were probably right in saying that a boy would be more interested in a story he *believed to be true*, although badly told, than he would be in one he knew was fictitious, even if it were faultless as a literary production. I have therefore determined to comply with their request and write them as good a book as I can about early times in Texas (which is all they can reasonably expect). I candidly admit that the many defects and crudities of the book, have had but little weight with me in determining the question of its publication. Any expectation I may have had of its favorable reception, is based solely upon the fact that the "old Texans" have always shown a liberality towards, and a willingness to favor, as far as they could, every one who came to their aid when they were struggling for life and a free government against a merciless foe—and I have every reason to believe that the descendants of these old pioneers are true "chips of the old blocks," only perhaps a little more *polished*, owing to the advantages they have had in the way of education, etc. If the saying be a true one that "Republics are ungrateful," then has Texas been a most notable exception to the general rule, for her liberality towards all who served her in her time of need (however unimportant the service may have been) has been unparalleled in the history of nations.

As I am fully aware the only claim this book has to patronage is that the scenes and incidents described therein are not fictitious, I lay great stress upon the fact that all I have stated in regard to my own adventures is *strictly true*. I can say this unhesitatingly, for the narrative was compiled from memorandums written shortly after my escape from Goliad, when everything was fresh in my memory. The scenes and incidents described in the second part of the book entitled "The Young Explorers" are also *true* though not occurring just as stated, for I have connected them together in a continuous narrative (in which several fictitious characters have been introduced), because I thought they would be more likely to interest a reader in that form than they would if told in disconnected fragments.

The frontiersmen or backwoodsmen as a class, like the flatboatmen of the Mississippi, must soon become extinct, for the day is fast approaching when there will be no frontiers or backwoods within the present boundaries of the United States. Their mission will have been accomplished, and that such a class ever existed in our country, will be known to future generations only through vague tradition, or because a few individuals among them, such as Daniel Boone or Kit Carson, have been prominent enough to entitle them to a passing notice in history. I have endeavored as far as I could to give the reader a correct idea of this unique class now rapidly becoming extinct, and of the peculiar state of affairs that existed in Texas at an early day; and for that reason I hope this book will not be altogether without interest to those who have known Texas only as it is now, or was for a few years past.

It is due to our colored citizens to say, that in depicting the character of Cudjo, I had no intention whatever to ridicule or cast a slur upon them. I have merely attempted to describe a type of the race common amongst them in antebellum days, and which in all probability would have been as common among any other race of people, if like them they had been for so long a time subjected to the demoralizing influences of ignorance and a degrading servitude. Now that they have been liberated "by the arbitrament of the sword," and can avail themselves of all their rights as free citizens of our common country, I hope (and believe from the advances they have already made) that the time will soon come when they will place themselves upon a level with those who enjoyed all the advantages of freedom whilst they were in a state of slavery.

With this explanation of the whys and wherefores, I launch my little cranky craft on the vast and uncertain ocean of "literary ventures," hoping its favorable reception by my young friends in Texas, will wait it into the haven of success alongside of many a more lofty and pretentious bark.

THE AUTHOR.

Early Times in Texas, or the Adventures of Jack Dobell.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY—THE VOLUNTEERS FOR TEXAS—DOWN THE MISSISSIPPI—NEW ORLEANS—OUT ON THE GULF.

In 1835 the people of Texas, or rather the settlers from the "States," determined to throw off the Mexican yoke, and resist to the last extremity any further encroachment upon their liberties. At that time, with the exception of Mexicans and Indians, there was probably not more than twenty thousand people in the colonies, and although the Mexican government for several years previously had shown a disposition to ignore the rights and privileges guaranteed them under the Constitution of 1824, I hardly think the colonists with their limited means and numbers would have ventured to rebel against its authority, if they had not counted largely on getting all the aid they should need to carry out the revolution successfully, from their friends and brethren in the United States. In this expectation they were not disappointed. Many young men, from almost every State in the Union, armed and equipped at their own expense, hastened to the assistance of the colonists, as soon as the standard of rebellion was raised.

A volunteer company was organized for this purpose in my native village, and although I was scarcely old enough to bear arms, I resolved to join it. But it was no aspiration for "military fame" that induced me to do so. One of the frequent visitors at my father's house was an old friend of his, who had been in Texas and traveled over a considerable portion of it, and who subsequently held a position in the cabinet of the first president. He was enthusiastic in his praise of the country, and insensibly an ardent longing sprang up in my bosom to see for myself the "broad prairies," the beautiful streams and vast herds of buffalo and wild horses of which he had so often given me glowing descriptions. By joining this company I thought an opportunity would be afforded me of gratifying it which perhaps might never again offer itself, and so, in spite of the opposition of relatives and friends, my name was added to the muster roll.

I purchased a good Kentucky rifle (with the use of which I was already well acquainted), shot pouch, powder horn, tomahawk, and butcher knife, and thus equipped, with my knapsack on my shoulders, I fell into ranks, and amid the waving of handkerchiefs and the cheering of bystanders I bid adieu to my native village and started for the "promised land" of Texas.

It was the latter part of November when we left B—, and though not very cold, the snow was some three or four inches deep on the ground, which retarded our march so much that we only made about twenty miles by sunset, when we halted for the night in a grove near the margin of a stream that empties into the famous "Salt River." We cleared away the snow from under the trees, built up log heaps for fires, and after eating our supper of hot coffee, "hard tack" and fried middling, for which our tramp had given us excellent appetites, we spread our blankets upon the fallen leaves and turned in for the night.

The next morning we were on the road by sunrise, and about dusk, after a toilsome and fatiguing march through the slush and mud (for a thaw had set in) we reached the city of Louisville and took up our quarters at the Galt House. The next day we purchased a supply of provisions—enough to last us for the voyage—and went on board of a steamer bound for New Orleans.

Nothing worthy of note occurred on the passage. Occasionally, by way of varying the monotony of our daily life, we would go ashore when the boat landed for wood or freight, and get up an impromptu "shooting match," in which the skill of our Kentucky riflemen was exhibited, greatly to the astonishment of the "natives." It was no unusual thing for many of them to put three balls out of five, at the distance of one hundred yards, into a paper not larger than a silver dollar.

The second day of the voyage we left the snow and ice behind us, and on the fourth we came to the region of "Spanish moss." The trees on both banks of the river were draped in its long funereal folds, which waving slowly back and forth in the breeze, was too suggestive of any but cheerful thoughts. The next day we came to the "coast," a strip of country so called, extending along the river for more than a hundred miles above the city of New Orleans. It is protected from overflow (though not entirely) by what are termed "levees," or embankments, thrown up on each side of the river, a few paces back from the margin, but these are sometimes broken through in very high stages of water. The river was uuusually full at the time we passed, and in one place we noticed where the water had made a breach in the embankment more than a hundred feet in width, through which it was rushing with the velocity of a mill race, and had already inundated the coast country on that side as far as the eye could extend.

From the time we struck the "coast" we experienced no more cold weather. Everywhere the forests were still green, and the orange and pomegranate were bending down with the weight of their ripened fruit. Here, too, we first observed extensive fields of cotton and sugar cane, in the former of which gangs of negroes were seen, bearing huge baskets filled with the "snowy fleece" upon their woolly heads.

The fifth day, we reached New Orleans, fortunately just in time to secure a passage on a schooner that was to sail the next day for Velasco, a small port at the mouth of the Brazos river. The following day, before the schooner was ready to sail, I had an opportunity to see the city, of which I was glad to avail myself. The great number of vessels moored in a long line to the wharves, the puffing of steamboats, the clatter of drays and carts, the noise and bustle on the levee, and the jargon of foreign tongues were all calculated to fill with astonishment and wonder the mind of a youth who had never before been beyond the precincts of his native village.

In the evening we embarked with all our goods and chattels on the schooner, and having made fast to a tow-boat, in company with two ships and a bark, we were soon under way, and bade farewell to the "Crescent City," and its forests of masts and tapering spires quickly faded away in the distance.

From New Orleans to the mouth of the Mississippi the scenery along the river is monotonous and dreary. Low swampy lands extended back in an unbroken level as far as we could see, in some places entirely covered with water and in others with a rank, luxuriant growth of reeds and coarse grass, among which cranes and many other aquatic birds could be seen silently standing in rows, or stalking solemnly about in search of the reptiles with which these marshes abounded. Along the shores immense piles of drift wood were heaped up, amongst which, and scarcely to be distinguished from the decayed logs composing them, the black scaly sides of an alligator could now and then be seen, to be saluted whenever within range, by a shower of bullets from our rifles.

The Mississippi empties into the gulf by three mouths and about 10 o'clock the day after we had left New Orleans, we entered the one called the "Southwest Pass" and an hour or so afterwards we had crossed the "bar" and were rolling and tossing upon the blue waves of the gulf of Mexico. The line was cast off from the tow-boat, sails hoisted and soon we were scudding along before a fair wind in the direction of the distant shores of Texas. For a long way out we noticed that the blue waters of the gulf refused to "fraternize" with the vast muddy stream continually pouring in from the mouths of the Mississippi.

In a few hours we lost sight of the low shores of Louisiana, and nothing was to be seen but the sky and the apparently interminable waste of blue water. Our schooner was a small one, and with more than fifty passengers on board, it can easily be imagined we were packed rather too closely together for comfort. For my share of the sleeping accomodations, I appropriated a large coil of chain cable, in the hollow of which by doubling up after the fashion of a jack knife, I managed to snooze pretty comfortably at night.

CHAPTER II.

CATCHING A NORTHER—FLYING FISH—LAND HO !—THE CITY OF VELASCO—DANGEROUS BAR—FIRST VIEW OF THE "PROMISED LAND"—NOT VERY PROMISING—CAMP AT THE RIVAL CITY OF QUINTANA—MUSTERED INTO SERVICE—FALSE ALARM—ORDERED ON BOARD OF SLOOP OF WAR INVINCIBLE—GALVESTON ISLAND—LOSS OF ONE OF OUR BOAT'S CREW—UNSUCCESSFUL CRUISE.

The second day of our voyage about sunset, we observed a black cloud towards the north, which spreading rapidly soon obscured the whole heavens. Sails were hauled down and reefed, the hatches secured, and every precaution taken for the safety of the vessel in the approaching "norther"—one of those fierce winds that frequently occur during the winter season in the gulf of Mexico, as well as on the prairies of Texas. We had scarcely made "all snug" when the norther struck the schooner with unusual violence, carrying away our maintop mast, and forcing the vessel almost upon her beam ends. She soon righted however, and away we flew before the blast that whistled and shrieked through the cordage in a way not at all pleasant and enlivening to the ears of a landsman. In a little while the waves began to rise and the vessel to toss and pitch like an unbroken mustang, and feeling some of the premonitory symptoms of sea sickness, such as a frantic effort to throw up my boots, I retired to my coil of cable below ; but the tossing of the schooner, the rushing of the waves along side and the trampling of sailors on deck effectually drove away sleep.

The next morning the storm had abated, the sun shone out clear and warm, and from that time until we reached Velasco we had no more bad weather. Whilst the storm lasted, a number of flying fish fell upon the deck of the schooner, which the sailors secured, and we found them to be an agreeable addition to our ordinary fare of sea biscuit and "salt junk." They are a delicate little fish, from six to eight inches in length with two long fins resembling wings projecting from the upper portion of the body. When chased by the dolphin or other large fish, they may be seen rising in schools from the tops of the waves, and flying forty or fifty yards in the direction of the wind; then dipping again into the crests of the billows, from which they quickly rise for another flight, should their enemies still continue to pursue them. Their flight rarely exceeds forty or fifty yards, for the reason that their fins cannot serve the purpose of wings unless frequently moistened by contact with the water.

On the morning of the seventh day after leaving Southwest Pass, the shores of Texas were dimly discernible from the masthead, looking like a long low cloud on the western horizon. The wind was "dead ahead" and we were nearly the whole day beating up within sight of the beach and the few miserable little shanties that then constituted the city of Velasco. Finding it was impossible to cross the bar with the wind ahead, we cast anchor in the roadstead, hoping it would be more favorable the next day. But the next morning it was still from the same quarter, and tired out with our confinement on board of the vessel a dozen of us manned the long boat, resolved to make a landing in spite of "wind and weather." But in this we "reckoned without our host," for we missed the channel, got into the breakers which came very near swamping our boat, and we were glad to make our escape from them back to the schooner again. Two years subsequently I saw a boat capsize amongst those same breakers, and although in full view of many people on shore, every one on board of her was drowned before any assistance could be given them.

Not long after our return to the schooner, to our great joy the wind hauled around to the east, which enabled us to cross the bar, and soon we were safely anchored in the mouth of the Brazos river. The country in the immediate vicinity of Velasco is low, and back of it a dead level prairie extended as far as the eye could reach; consequently I must confess I was not much pleased with the first view of the "promised land." Velasco was a miserable little village consisting of two stores and a hotel, so called, and five or six grog shops, dignified with the name of "saloons." Opposite to it, on the south bank of the river was the rival city of Quintana, containing about the same number of shanties and a mixed population of Yankees, Mexicans and Indians.

We landed upon the Quintana side and pitched our camp upon the beach, adjoining the camps of several other companies that had arrived a few days previously. Here we remained two weeks or more, and as we were liberally supplied with rations by the patriotic firm of McKinney & Williams, and game and fish were to be had in abundance, we "fared sumptuously" every day. In hunting and fishing, making tents, cleaning our guns, and preparing in other ways for our anticipated campaign, our time passed pleasantly enough.

Whilst at this place our company was formally mustered into service of the embryo Republic of Texas. It was left optional with us to enlist for twelve months or for "during the war," and we unanimously chose the latter upon the principle of "in for a penny, in for a pound," or as Davy Crockett would have said, we resolved to "go the whole hog or none."

One day whilst we were encamped at Quintana we had quite an exciting scene, which bade fair for a time to initiate us into the realities of actual warfare. Two vessels were seen in the offing, one of them evidently in hot pursuit of the other. As soon as they had approached near enough to be distinctly seen through a glass, it was asserted by several who claimed to know, that the smaller vessel was the Invincible, a schooner recently purchased by Texas, and the larger one in pursuit was the Bravo, a noted Mexican privateer. In this opinion we were confirmed, as a sharp cannonading began between the two vessels. Our company was at once ordered on board of a small steamer lying in the mouth of the Brazos, with instructions to hasten to the assistance of the Invincible with as little delay as possible. We quickly got up steam, and notwithstanding the violence of the breakers on the bar, which on two occasions broke entirely over our little steamer, we were soon alongside of the foremost vessel, which proved to be as we had supposed, the Texas schooner, Invincible. By this time the other vessel had approached near enough to be recognized as the Brutus, lately purchased also for the Texas navy, and after the interchange of some signals the firing ceased. Each vessel, it seems, had mistaken the other for the Bravo, and hence the pursuit of the Brutus, and the attempt of the Invincible to escape, as she had only a sailing crew on board; and we were compelled to return to camp without having had an opportunity of "fleshing our maiden swords."

A few days afterwards, our company was ordered to take up our quarters on board the Invincible, to serve as a kind of marine corps for her protection until a regular crew could be enlisted. Whilst on board of her, in the hope of meeting the Bravo, we took a cruise along the coast as far as the east end of Galveston island. Here an incident occurred, which as being indicative of the great changes that have taken place since the times of which I write, may be worth mentioning. We were lying at anchor off the point of the island, and as we were running short of wood and water, a boat was sent ashore for a supply. The former could be had in any quantity along the beach, and the latter, though slightly brackish, by digging shallow wells at the base of the sand hills. When the boat was ready to return, it was found that one of the crew, who had wandered off from the well whilst the others were filling the casks, was missing. Search was made for him, but he was nowhere to be seen, and as there was every appearance of a "norther" coming up, the officer in command of the boat thought it most prudent to hasten back to the vessel, leaving the missing man on the island. In a few minutes after the boat reached the vessel the norther struck us, and we were compelled to hoist anchor and run before it.

Three days elapsed in beating back to our anchorage, and a boat was immediately sent ashore with a crew of half a dozen men, to look for our lost comrade. At length he was found, five or six miles below the place where he had been left, wandering on the beach, searching for oysters and clams, upon which he had subsisted since leaving the vessel. His mind was considerably affected by exposure to the norther, his fear of wild beasts and savages, and the apprehension of our failing to return. For several days he talked in a wild and incoherent manner, and he did not entirely regain his mind for two or three weeks. For three days this man had wandered about the island without seeing a living soul, and yet it is probable he was at no time more than four or five miles from where Galveston, a city of forty thousand inhabitants, now stands!

After an unsuccessful cruise in search of the Bravo, we returned to Quintana, and pitched our tents again upon our old camping ground.

CHAPTER III.

LEAVE FOR COPANO—LAND AT MATAGORDA ISLAND—RENDEZVOUS OF LAFITTE THE PIRATE—ARRIVE AT COPANO—TEXAS RANGERS—MARCH TO REFUGIO—OLD CHURCH AT REFUGIO—PRIMITIVE METHOD OF SKIMMING MILK—MARCH TO GOLIAD — CARANCHUA INDIANS — DEER — WILD HORSES — NORTHERS—ARRIVAL AT GOLIAD.

A day or so after our return to Quintana, the officer in command of the Invincible was instructed to take our company on board and to sail immediately for Copano, on Aransas bay, where we were to disembark and march from thence to Goliad. It was rumored that a considerable force had already been concentrated at that point, under the command of Col. J. W. Fannin, destined for the invasion of the border States of Mexico, and of course we surmised that our company would form a part of the invading army.

We set sail about dark, and a brisk norther springing up, by daylight the next morning we were in sight of Aransas Pass, which we shortly entered without difficulty, and cast anchor in a secure harbor behind the southwest point of Matagorda island. This harbor had been, in times past, a rendezvous for the vessels of the famous pirate, Lafitte. On the island the embankments around his old camping grounds or fortifications were still visible, and along the beach were many posts yet standing with iron rings affixed to them, which undoubtedly had been used for securing the small boats that plied between the vessels and the shore. "The pass" was known then only to Lafitte and his followers, and here in security they could repair their vessels, supply them with wood and water, and divide among themselves the spoils of their piratical expeditions. On the east end of Galveston island they had a similar place of rendezvous, near where the city now stands, and the remains of their fortifications could be plainly seen when I first landed on the island, in 1837. A few years ago, while excavating sand near these old fortifications, some workmen found a considerable amount of old Spanish coin, buried there no doubt, by some pirate on the eve of his departure upon some marauding expedition, from which probably he never returned.

We remained on the island several days, passing the time very pleasantly hunting and fishing, and gathering oysters, which were abundant in the bay, and then we embarked on board of a small vessel for Copano, which at that time was the principal port of Southwest Texas. In a few hours we reached the port, and landing, we pitched our tents on the bluff just back of it. Here we found a company of Texas Rangers who had been on frontier service for six months, during all of which time they had not seen a morsel of bread. They had subsisted solely upon beef and the game they killed. We gave them a part of the "hard tack" we had brought with us, and though wormeaten and musty, they devoured it with as keen a relish as if it had been the greatest delicacy. Although they had had no bread for so long a time, they were healthy and in "good order," which convinces me that Byron was right in saying that man was a carniverous animal, and would bear vegetables "only in a grumbling way"—especially beans.

From Copano (which consisted mainly of a warehouse and a large tank of fresh water) we took up the line of march for Refugio, distant about twenty miles. It is situated on a little stream called Mission river, near the bank of which we pitched our tents, just before sunset. Refugio at that time contained about two dozen adobe huts (inhabited by a mixed population of Irish and Mexicans), and an old, dilapidated church, built, I was told, the same year that Philadelphia was founded. A few months subsequently Refugio was the scene of a hard fought battle between thirty-five Americans under Capt. King, and a large body of Mexican cavalry.

The old church, where King and his men defended themselves for some time against a host of Mexicans, when I last saw it, still showed evidence of the severity of the conflict in its battered walls and its roof perforated with shot from the Mexican artilery.

Observing a number of fat cows in the vicinity of the village, I concluded to go out and forage for a little of the "lacteal fluid," of which we had not had a drop since leaving Kentucky. So taking a camp kettle in my hand I went to the nearest house and inquired of a woman standing at the door, if she had any milk for sale. "Faith, and I have," said she, "any kind you may want, swate milk, butter milk, clabber milk and blue johns." I told her I would take some of the "swate," whereupon she led me to a small out-house, in which were a number of pans filled with milk. Selecting one containing the "swate," she rolled up her sleeve and deliberately proceeded to skim it with her open hand, which looked to me to have been unacquainted with soap and water for some time past. When she had finished skimming the milk in this primitive fashion, she poured the contents of the pan into my camp kettle, at the same time saying: "There, my little mon, there's a pan of milk for yez that's fit for the Pope of Room, Heaven protect His Holiness." I said nothing, though like the owl I did a good deal of thinking, paid for the milk and returned to camp, where my hungry messmates speedily emptied the kettle, wondering that I took coffee in preference to such nice new milk. I told them of the skimming process I had witnessed, but men in camp are not usually very "squeamish," and they merely said "that what would not poison would fatten;" that they had to "eat their peck of dirt anyhow," and the sooner they got through with the job the better.

The next morning we continued our march for Goliad, about thirty miles distant, but as we got a late start, we only made twenty miles or so by sunset, and pitched our camp near a pool of fresh water, under the shelter of some spreading live oak trees. Here we found encamped a band of the Caranchua tribe of Indians, at that time professing to be friendly to the Americans. We were told that these Indians were cannibals, that they always devoured the prisoners they took in their conflicts with their enemies. They were the largest Indians I have ever seen, scarcely a man among them being less than six feet high, and many of them over six feet. The men were entirely naked, saving a breech cloth fastened around the waist, and being hideously painted, one can readily imagine that they presented a most ferocious and savage appearance. Their language was the most peculiar jargon of gutteral sounds I ever heard, the words seeming to be articulated by some spasmodic action of the throat without any aid from the tongue or lips. They were armed with long lances, bows and arrows, and a few with old flint-lock muskets.

These Indians some time afterwards captured several Americans and killed and "barbecued" them, which so enraged the settlers that they organized an expedition against them and succeeded in exterminating the whole tribe with the exception of a small remnant that fled to Mexico. These Caranchuas, I believe, were the only Indians known to be cannibals, on the North American continent.

Along the whole route from Copano to where we were encamped, we had seen great numbers of deer, sometimes as many as two or three hundred in a drove, and so unused to being hunted or disturbed by man, that even when we approached within a few yards of them they showed no signs of fear. Of course we had no difficulty in getting fresh meat whenever we wanted it. Once, too, at the distance of half a mile we saw a large drove of mustangs, but they were much wilder than the deer, for when several of us attempted to approach them, they circled around us out of range of our rifles, every now and then stopping a moment, stamping and snorting, until at last one of them that seemed to be the leader of the drove, started off at full speed, and the rest following, in a short time nothing but a cloud of dust indicated the direction they had taken. Some years subsequent to this, a company of rangers to which I belonged, when in pursuit of Indians in the country between the Nueces and Rio Grande rivers, met with a drove of mustangs so large that it took us fully an hour to pass it, although they were traveling at a rapid rate in a direction nearly opposite to the one we were going. As far as the eye could extend on a dead level prairie, nothing was visible except a dense mass of horses, and the trampling of their hoofs sounded like the roar of the surf on a rocky coast. Most persons probably would be inclined to doubt this "horse story," and to consider it one to be told to the "horse marines" alone; yet it is literally true, and many are still living who were with me at the time, who can testify that my statement is in no manner exaggerated.

During the night a norther came up, but as we were well protected by thick timber, which afforded plenty of fuel for our fires, we managed to keep pretty comfortable. These "northers," as they are called in Texas, are winds that spring up suddenly from the North, during the winter season, sometimes "dry," at other times accompanied with rain or sleet. At first they blow with considerable violence, but gradually subside in the course of one, two or three days, and are followed usually by a week or so of clear, pleasant weather. To travelers unprepared for them they are very disagreeable visitants, and instances have been known of persons freezing to death in them when caught out in the open prairies where there was no shelter from the wind nor means of making a fire.

Early the next morning we took the road for Goliad again, and in the course of three or four hours we came in sight of the dome of the old Mission. Not long afterwards we entered the town and took up our quarters in an empty stone building near the old church. Here we found about four hundred men under the command of Colonel J. W. Fannin, the force with which it was designed to invade the border States of Mexico.

CHAPTER IV.

Description of Goliad—Daily Drills and "Dress Parades"—Our Company Called the "Mustangs," and the Reason Why!—March to San Patricio—Carlo's Ranch—Capture of the Rev. Padre and his Couriers—An Alarm that Ended very Pleasantly—Indebted to the Rev. Padre for a "Good Square Meal"—Tired of Tramping the Boys Mount Mustangs but Dismount very Expeditiously--Return on Foot to Goliad.

Goliad, at the time we arrived there, contained a population of about two thousand Mexicans who were *professedly* friendly to the Texans, but who afterwards, when Santa Anna invaded the country, proved to be their most vindictive foes. I must, however, make an exception in favor of the "Senoritas," who generally preferred the blue-eyed, fair complexioned young Saxons to their copper-colored beaux.

Goliad is situated on the south side of the San Antonio river, about forty miles above its mouth, and ninety-five miles below the city of San Antonio. The American town of Goliad, built up since the war, is situated nearly opposite the old town, on the north side of the river. After the defeat of Santa Anna, the great majority of the inhabitants of the old town abandoned the place and went to Mexico. When I last saw it, in 1877, its population had dwindled down to one or two hundred miserable "peons" and most of the "jacals" or huts were gone. The Old Mission, with its dilapidated walls, half a dozen stone tenements and a few adobe houses alone remained to designate the spot where once had stood the old town of Goliad.

The lands around the place are rich and productive, and the locality (though we did not find it so) is a healthy one. Thousands of fat beeves roamed the prairies in its vicinity, and as corn could be had in abundance upon the neighboring ranches, we were well supplied with provisions. Besides, when the Texans took possession of the place, several months previous to our arrival, a large amount of sugar and coffee was found in the Mexican commissary department, which, of course, we did not scruple to appropriate to our own use.

In order to render his little force as effective as possible, when the time for action should come, Colonel Fannin ordered daily drills, which were my detestation and from which I invariably absented myself whenever I had a pretext for doing so. I greatly preferred hunting deer in the prairies and attending the "fandangos" or dances that took place daily and nightly in one part of the town or the other.

Not long after our arrival at Goliad the soubriquet of Mustangs or Wild Horses was acquired by our company from the following incident: M—., our second lieutenant, was a man of great physical powers, but withal one of the most peaceful and most genial men when not under the influence of liquor. But occasionally he would get on a "spree" and then he was as wild as a "March hare" and perfectly uncontrollable. The Mexicans seemed to know him and to fear him, also, and when he was on one of his "benders" they would retreat into their houses as soon as they saw him and shut their doors. This proceeding, of course, was calculated to irritate M—., and he would forthwith kick the door from its hinges. On a certain occasion he battered down the doors of half a dozen houses in one street, and from that time the Mexicans called him the "Mustang," and finally the name was applied to the company.

But few events occurred to vary the daily routine of our life at Goliad. The following, however, I will mention: Our company was detailed on one occasion to go to San Patricio, an Irish settlement about fifty miles southwest from Goliad, for the purpose of securing a couple of field pieces left there by the Mexicans. This we accomplished without difficulty, and without any opposition, although our scouts had informed Colonel Fannin that a considerable force of Mexican guerillas was in the vicinity of the place.

On another occasion our company was detailed to march to Carlos Ranch, a Mexican village about twenty miles below Goliad, with instructions to arrest certain of the inhabitants, who, it was ascertained, were constantly transmitting intelligence of our movements to Santa Anna, and among the number was the old padre or priest of the village. In order that the Mexicans might not suspect our object and frustrate our plans by giving the padre and his friends timely warning of our intentions, we left the town quietly after dark in the opposite direction to the one we designed taking. When safe beyond observation, we turned our course down the river, and making a forced march, we reached the village a little before daylight and surrounded it without alarming any of the inhabitants. A detachment then entered the padre's house, and caught the bird in his nest, together with five or six other suspicious characters (supposed to be his couriers, as in fact they were), and the whole of them were "bagged" without alarming any of the people in the village. Having thus accomplished our object we marched to a point on the river about a quarter of a mile above, where we halted in a grove to rest and prepare something for breakfast. Placing a guard over the padre and his couriers, we stacked our guns and soon every one was busily engaged in cooking such "grub" as we had in our knapsacks. By this time the sun had risen, and we were just seating ourselves on the grass around the scanty fare we had prepared for our breakfast (consisting of hard tack, jerked beef and the inevitable coffee), when our attention was drawn to shrieks and doleful cries in the direction of the village, and seeing a crowd of people coming from it towards us, we hastily sprang to our guns, thinking the Mexicans were about to make an attempt to rescue the prisoners, but as the crowd drew nearer, we saw that it was composed mostly of women and children. It seems that they had just found out we had captured their Reverend padre, and they were coming to bid him farewell and obtain his parting blessing.

I had heard that the Mexicans were completely under the control of their priests, but I had but a faint conception of the fact until I witnessed the scene that ensued. As the came up the women knelt at his feet, weeping and mourning, and kissed his hand and even the hem of his priestly robes. Presently another crowd of women came from the village, bringing with them plates filled with hot "tortillas," pots of coffee, "dulces," etc., intended for the padre's breakfast, and that of the other prisoners, and when they deposited them on the grass before them we took possession of them as the "legitimate spoils of war" and found they were much better than our course of hard tack and dried beef. Such conduct on our part, I admit, bordered closely on the "*sacrilegious*," but then you must remember we had been marching all night and of course were very hungry—and as the Mexicans said themselves, "what better could you expect from 'Gringos' and heretics!"

Seeing that the Rev. padre would have but little chance to get his breakfast until we had ours, the women continued to bring in fresh supplies of eatables as fast as we disposed of them. Finally however, when our hunger was appeased, the Rev. padre and his couriers had a show at what was left.

In the vicinity of the place where we had halted, we noticed a large "corral" in which several hundred head of mustangs were penned. We were all tired of "trudging" on foot, and concluded we would "press" into the service (a military term for appropriating property belonging to others) a sufficient number of these mustangs to mount the whole company. Accordingly we compelled the Mexicans to rope and equip with saddles and bridles about fifty of them. We were all I suppose pretty good horsemen, as the term is understood in the "old States," but we knew that these mustangs were only partially broken to the saddle, and we anticipated having some "fun" when we mounted them—though nothing like as much as we really got, for at the time, we were totally ignorant of that peculiar trick of mustangs called "pitching," by which they manage almost invariably to get rid of a "green" rider. When the mustangs with considerable difficulty, after roping them closely to trees, had all been saddled and bridled, at the word of command, we mounted (except five or six who failed to do so) and the next instant a scene of horses kicking, rearing and plunging ensued, of which only a confused recollection remained upon my mind, and in less time than it takes me to tell of it, we were all put "hors de combat," (no pun intended.)

As for the part I took individually in this equestrian performance, I have only to say that I had hardly seated myself in the saddle, when my unruly steed humped his back like a mad cat, reared up, and then came down on his stiffened fore legs with such force, that if "next week" had been lying on the ground ten or fifteen feet ahead of me, I would certainly have knocked out the middle. I was partially stunned by the fall but soon rose to my feet, and was much relieved and consoled looking round, to find that all the rest had been served in the same way, except one rider who managed to stick upon his horse in spite of all the animal's efforts to get rid of him. The Mexicans no doubt had purposely selected the wildest horses in the corral, and it is probable the most of them had never been backed half a dozen times even by the rancheros themselves, who are unsurpassed by any people in horsemanship. I am confident that the padre and his flock enjoyed this equestrian performance much more than the actors, but as heretofore the laugh had been all on our side, we did not blame them for the pleasure they took in our discomfiture. However, we concluded to dispense with our unmanageable steeds, "unpressed" them by restoring them to their lawful owners, and resumed our march *on foot* for Goliad. The Mexican padre was sent to San Felipe on the Brazos, where he was securely caged until Santa Anna and his army were defeated and driven from Texas. He had the reputation of being a great scoundrel and an inveterate gambler, and his sinister countenance did not belie "the soft impeachment." I will do him the justice however, to say that we were indebted to him for the best breakfast we had eaten since landing in Texas. Peace to his ashes.

CHAPTER V.

RUMORS OF THE ADVANCE OF GEN. SANTA ANNA—INTENDED INVASION OF MEXICO ABANDONED—PREPARATIONS FOR THE DEFENSE OF GOLIAD — SANTA ANNA CROSSES THE RIO GRANDE—MASSACRE OF CAPT. GRANT AND HIS MEN AT SAN PATRICIO—CAPT. KING WITH THIRTY-FIVE MEN SENT TO REFUGIO—BATTLE AT REFUGIO AND MASSACRE OF CAPT. KING AND HIS MEN—DISPATCH FROM GENERAL HOUSTON —GEORGIA BATTALION UNDER MAJOR WARD SENT TO THE ASSISTANCE OF CAPT. KING—CAPTURE OF THE GEORGIA BATTALION—COL. FANNIN DETERMINES TO RETREAT—PREPARATIONS FOR RETREATING—THE RETREAT AND FATAL "HALT" IN THE PRAIRIE.

Some time after our arrival at Goliad, information was obtained from some friendly Mexicans that General Santa Anna was preparing to enter Texas at the head of a large army; consequently all idea of invading Mexico, was abandoned, and we set to work to render the fortifications around the old missions as defensible as possible. We strengthened the walls in meny places, built several new bastions on which artillery was placed in such a way as to command all the roads leading into the town.

Every day we were drilled by our officers for three hours in the morning and two in the afternoon, which, as I have said before was a great bore to me, as I would have preferred passing the time in hunting and fishing. We also deepened the trenches around the walls, and dug a ditch from the fort to the river, and covered it with plank and earth, so that we might obtain a supply of water, if besieged, without being exposed to the fire of the enemy. We were well supplied with artillery and ammunition for the same, and also with small arms, and had beef, sugar and coffee enough to last us for two months—but very little bread.

Some time in February, a Mexican from the Rio Grande arrived at Goliad who informed Col. Fannin that Santa Anna had already or would shortly cross the river into Texas with a large army which would advance in two divisions, one towards Goliad and the other towards the city of San Antonio. Some days afterwards, two or three Texans came in from San Patricio, bringing the news that Capt. Grant and some twenty-five or thirty men stationed at that place, had been surprised by a force of Mexican guerillas and all of them massacred. About this time also a courier from Refugio came in who stated to Col. Fannin that he had been sent by the people of that place, to ask for a detachment of men to escort them to Goliad, as they were daily expecting an attack from the guerillas.

In compliance with this request, Col. Fannin sent Capt. King and his company (about thirty-five men) to act as escort for those families who desired to leave. When Capt. King and his men reached Refugio, they were attacked on the outskirts of the town by a large force of Mexican cavalry, and being hard pressed they retreated into the old mission, a strong stone building, at that time encompassed by walls. There they defended themselves successfully, and kept the Mexicans at bay until their artillery came up, when they opened fire upon it with two field pieces which soon breached the walls, and the place was then taken by storm. Capt. King and some seven or eight of his men (the only survivors of the bloody conflict), were captured and led out to a post oak grove north of town, where they were tied to trees and shot. Their bones were found still tied to the trees, when the Texan forces reoccupied the place in the summer of '36.

About this time a courier arrived bringing a dispatch from Gen. Houston to Col. Fannin, and it was rumored in camp that the purport of this dispatch was "that Col. Fannin should evacuate Goliad and fall back without delay towards the settlements on the Colorado." But as to the truth of this I cannot speak positively. At any rate Col. Fannin showed no disposition to obey the order if he received it—on the contrary, hearing nothing from Capt. King, although he had sent out three scouts at different times to obtain information of his movements, all of whom were captured and killed, he despatched Maj. Ward with the Georgia Battalion (about one hundred and fifty strong) to his assistance. They were attacked before they reached Refugio by a large force of Mexican cavalry. They made a gallant defense for some time against the vastly superior numbers of the enemy, but at length their ammunition was exhausted and they were compelled to retreat to the timber on the river, where they were surrounded by the Mexican cavalry, and most of them finally captured.

This division of our small force in the face of an enemy so greatly our superior in numbers, was, in my opinion, a fatal error on the part of Col. Fannin.

Hearing nothing either from Capt. King or Major Ward, and satisfied from information obtained by our scouts that a large force of Mexicans was in the vicinity of Goliad, Col. Fannin and his officers held a council of war in which it was determined to evacuate the place and fall back as rapidly as possible towards Victoria on the Guadalupe river. The same day, I believe, or the next after this council of war was held, a courier came in from San Antonio bringing a dispatch, as I was informed, from Col. Travis, to the effect "that he was surrounded in the Alamo by Santa Anna's army, and requesting Col. Fannin to come to his relief without delay."

Rations for five days and as much ammunition as each man could conveniently carry were immediately issued, and our whole force, including a small artillery company with two o three field pieces, started for San Antonio, crossing the river at the ford a half mile or so above town. After crossing the river and marching a short distance on the San Antonio road, a halt was made and our officers held a consultation, the result of which (I suppose) was the conclusion that we could not reach San Antonio in time to be of any assistance to Col. Travis. At any rate we were marched back to Goliad, recrossing the river at the lower ford.

A few hours after we had got back to our old quarters, a detachment of Mexican cavalry, probably eighty or a hundred strong, showed themselves at a short distance from the fort apparently bantering us to come out and give them a fight. Col. Horton, who had joined us a few days previously with twenty-five mounted men, went out to meet them, but when he charged them they fled precipitately, and we saw them no more that day.

That evening preparations were made to abandon the place; to that end we spiked our heaviest pieces of artillery, buried some in trenches, reserving several field pieces, two or three howitzers and a mortar to take with us on our retreat. We also dismantled the fort as much as possible, burnt the wooden buildings in its immediate vicinity and destroyed all the ammunition and provisions for which we had no means of transportation.

The next morning we bade a final farewell, as we supposed, to Goliad, and marched out on the road to Victoria. We had nine small pieces of ordnance and one mortar, all drawn by oxen as were our baggage wagons. Our whole force comprised about two hundred and fifty men, besides a small company of artillery and twenty-five mounted men under Col. Horton.

We crossed the San Antonio river at the ford below town, and a short distance beyond Menahecila creek we entered the large prairie extending to the timber on the Coletto, a distance of eight or nine miles. When we had approached within two and a half or three miles of the point where the road we were traveling entered the timber (though it was somewhat nearer to the left) a halt was ordered and the oxen were unyoked from guns and wagons, and turned out to graze. What induced Col. Fannin to halt at this place in the open prairie, I cannot say, for by going two and a half miles further, we would have reached the Coletto creek, where there was an abundance of water and where we would have had the protection of timber in the event of being attacked. I understood at the time that several of Col. Fannin's officers urged him strongly to continue the march until we reached the creek, as it was certain that a large body of Mexican troops were somewhere in the vicinity; but however this may be, Col. Fannin was not to be turned from his purpose, and the halt was made. Possibly he may have thought that two hundred and fitfy well armed Americans under any circumstances would be able to defend themselves against any force the Mexicans had within striking distance, but as the sequel will show the halt at this place was a most fatal one for us. Up to this time we had seen no Mexicans, with the exception of two mounted men, who made their appearance from some timber a long way to our right and who no doubt were spies watching our movements.

CHAPTER VI.

MEXICAN CAVALRY SURROUND US ON THE PRAIRIE—COL. HORTON AND HIS MEN CUT OFF FROM US AND FORCED TO RETREAT—THE BATTLE OF COLETTO—IN A "TIGHT PLACE" I LET OFF MY SCOPET AND COME VERY NEAR KILLING ALL "BEHIND IT."—CARISE INDIAN SHARPSHOOTERS—CAPT. D. GIVES FOUR OF THEM THEIR "QUIETUS"—MEXICAN PRISONERS "HOLE" THEMSELVES—RETREAT OF THE ENEMY.

At length after a halt of perhaps an hour and a half on the prairie, and just as we were about to resume our march for the Coletto, a long dark line was seen to detach itself from the timber behind us, and another at the same time from the timber to our left. Some one near me exclaimed, "Here come the Mexicans!" and in fact, in a little while, we perceived that these dark lines were men on horseback, moving rapidly towards us. As they continued to approach, they lengthened out their columns, evidently for the purpose of surrounding us, and in doing so displayed their numbers to the greatest advantage. I thought there were at least *ten thousand* (having never before seen a large cavalry force), but in reality there were about a thousand besides several hundred infantry (mostly Carise Indians).

In the meantime we were formed into a "hollow square" with lines three deep, in order to repel the charge of the cavalry, which we expected would soon be made upon us. Our artillery was placed at the four angles of the square, and our wagons and oxen inside. Our vanguard under Col. Horton, had gone a mile or so ahead of us, and the first intimation they had of the approach of the enemy was hearing the fire of our artillery when the fight began. They galloped back as rapidly as possible to regain our lines, but the Mexicans had occupied the road before they came up and they were compelled to retreat. The Mexicans pursued them beyond the Coletto, but as they were well mounted they made their escape.

The loss of these mounted men was a most unfortunate one for us. Had they been with us that night after we had driven off the Mexicans, we would have had means of transportation for our wounded, and could easily have made our retreat to the Coletto.

When the Mexicans had approached to within half a mile of our lines they formed into three columns, one remaining stationary, the other two moving to our right and left, but still keeping at about the same distance from us. Whilst they were carrying out this maneuver, our artillery opened upon them with some effect, for now and then we could see a round shot plough through their dense ranks. When the two moving columns, the one on the right and the one on the left were opposite to each other, they suddenly changed front and the three columns with trumpets braying and pennons flying, charged upon us simultaneously from three directions.

When within three or four hundred yards of our lines our artillery opened upon them with grape and cannister shot, with deadly effect,—but still their advance was unchecked, until their foremost ranks were in actual contact in some places with the bayonets of our men. But the fire at close quarters from our muskets and rifles was so rapid and destructive, that before long they fell back in confusion, leaving the ground covered in places with horses and dead men.

Capt. D——'s company of Kentucky riflemen and one or two small detachments from other companies formed one side of our "square," and in addition to our rifles, each man in the front rank was furnished with a musket and bayonet to repel the charge of cavalry. Besides my rifle and musket I had slung across my shoulders an "escopeta," a short light "blunderbuss" used by the Mexican cavalry, which I had carried all day in expectation of a fight, and which was heavily charged with forty "blue whistlers" and powder in proportion. It was my intention only to fire it when in a very "tight place," for I was well aware it was nearly as dangerous *behind* it as before. In the charge made by the Mexican cavalry they nearly succeeded in breaking our lines at several places, and certainly they would have done so had we not taken the precaution of arming all in the front rank with the bayonet and musket. At one time it was almost a hand to hand fight between the cavalry and our front rank, but the two files in the rear poured such a continuous fire upon the advancing columns, that, as I have said, they were finally driven back in disorder. It was during this charge and when the Mexican cavalry on our side of the square were in a few feet of us, that I concluded that I had got into that "tight place" and that it was time to let off the "scopet" I carried. I did so, and immediately I went heels over head through both ranks behind me. One or two came to my assistance supposing no doubt I was shot (and in truth I thought for a moment myself that a two ounce bullet had struck me) but I soon rose to my feet and took my place in the line again just as the cavalry began to fall back. Now, I don't assert that it was the forty "blue whistlers" I had sent among them from my "scopet" that caused them to retreat in confusion. I merely mention the fact that they did fall back very soon after I had let off the blunderbuss among them. My shoulder was black and blue from the recoil for a month afterwards. When I took my place in the line again, I never looked for my "scopet," but contented myself while the fight lasted with my rifle.

The Mexicans had no doubt supposed they would be able to break our lines at the first charge, and were evidently much disconcerted by their failure to do so; for although they reformed their broken columns and made two more attempts to charge us, they were driven back as soon as they came within close range of our small arms.

When they were satisfied that it was impossible for them to break our lines, the cavalry dismounted and surrounding us in open order, they commenced a "fusilade" upon us with their muskets and escopetas, but being very poor marksmen, most of their bullets passed harmlessly over our heads. Besides, this was a game at which we could play also, and for every man killed or wounded on our side I am confident that two or three Mexicans fell before the deadly fire from our rifles. But there were with the Mexicans probably a hundred or so Carise Indians, who were much more daring, and withal better marksmen. They boldly advanced to the front, and taking advantage of every little inequality of the ground and every bunch of grass that could afford them particular cover, they would crawl up closely and fire upon us, and now and then the discharge of their long single barrel shot guns was followed by the fall of some one in our ranks. Four of them had crawled up behind some bunches of tall grass within eighty yards of us, from whence they delivered their fire with telling effect. Capt. D—— who was using a heavy Kentucky rifle, and was known to be one of the best marksmen in his company, was requested to silence these Indians. He took a position near a gun carriage, and whenever one of the Indians showed his head above the tall grass it was perforated with an ounce rifle ball, and after four shots they were seen no more. At the moment he fired the last shot Capt. D—— had one of the fingers of his right hand taken off by a musket ball. When the Mexicans quit the field, we examined the locality where these Indians had secreted themselves, and found the four lying closely together, each one with a bullet hole through his head.

At the commencement of the fight a little incident of a somewhat ludicrous character occurred. We had some five or six Mexican prisoners (the couriers of the old padre, captured at Carlos' Ranch). These we had placed within the square, when the fight began, for safe keeping, and in an incredibly short time, with picks and shovels, they dug a trench deep enough to "hole" themselves, where they lay "perdue" and completely protected from bullets. I for one, however, didn't blame them, as they were non-combatants, and besides to tell the truth when bullets were singing like mad hornets around me, and men were struck down near me, I had a great inclination to "hole up" myself and draw it in after me.

The fight continued in a desultory kind of way, until near sunset, when we made a sortie upon the dismounted cavalry, and they hastily remounted and fell back to the timber to our left, where, as soon as it was dark, a long line of fires indicated the position of their encampment.

That night was anything but rest for us, for anticipating a renewal of the fight the next morning, all hands were set to work digging entrenchments and throwing up embankments, and at this we labored unceasingly till nearly daylight. We dug four trenches enclosing a square large enough to contain our whole force, throwing the earth on the outside, on which we placed our baggage and everything else available, that might help to protect us from the bullets of the enemy.

Before we began this work, however, Col. Fannin made a short speech to the men, in which he told them "that in his opinion, the only way of extricating themselves from the difficulty they were in, was to retreat after dark to the timber on the Coletto, and cut their way through the enemy's lines should they attempt to oppose the movement." He told them there was no doubt they would be able to do this, as the enemy had evidently been greatly demoralized by the complete failure of the attack they had made upon us. He said, moreover, that the necessity for a speedy retreat was the more urgent, as it was more than probable that the Mexicans would be heavily reinforced during the night. He concluded by saying that if a majority were in favor of retreating, preparations would be made to leave as soon as it was dark enough to conceal our movements from the enemy. But we had about seventy men wounded (most of them badly) and as almost every one had some friend or relative among them, after a short consultation upon the subject, it was unanimously determined not to abandon our wounded men, but to remain with them and share their fate, whatever it might be.

CHAPTER VII.

TEXAN LOSS IN THE COLETTO FIGHT—DISMAL NIGHT ON THE PRAIRIE—THREE DESERTERS SHOT BY THE MEXICAN PATROL —PREPARATIONS FOR RENEWING THE FIGHT—HOISTIN THE "WHITE FLAG"—COL. FANNIN REFUSES TO SURRENDER "AT DISCRETION"—MEXICANS FIRE UPON US WITH ARTILLERY—WHITE FLAG AGAIN—PARLEY—GEN. URREA COMES INTO OUR LINES—CAPITULATION AGREED UPON AND TERMS REDUCED TO WRITING—MEXICAN LOSS IN THE FIGHT—MARTINEZ THE TREACHEROUS FRIEND.

Our loss in the Coletto fight was ten killed and about seventy wounded (Col. Fannin among the latter), and most of them badly, owing to the size of the balls thrown by the Mexican escopetas, and the shotguns of the Indians. The number of our casualities was extremely small considering the force of the enemy, and the duration of the fight, which began about three o'clock and lasted till nearly sunset. I can only account for it by the fact that the Mexicans were very poor marksmen, and that their powder was of a very inferior quality. There was scarcely a man in the whole command who had not been struck by one or more spent balls, which, in place of mere bruises would have inflicted dangerous or fatal wounds if the powder used by the Mexicans had been better.

I can never forget how slowly the hours of that dismal night passed by. The distressing cries of our wounded men begging for water when there was not a drop to give them, were continually ringing in my ears. Even those who were not wounded, but were compelled to work all night in the trenches, suffered exceedingly with thirst. Even after we had fortified our position as well as we could, we had but little hopes of being able to defend ourselves, should the Mexicans as we apprehended, receive reinforcements during the night, for we had but one or two rounds of ammunition left for the cannon, and what remained for the small arms was not sufficient for a protracted struggle.

Some time during the night it was ascertained that three of our men (whose names I have forgotten) had deserted, and shortly afterwards as a volley of musketry was heard between us and the timber on the Coletto, they were no doubt discovered and shot by the Mexican patrol.

Daylight at last appeared, and before the sun had risen we saw that the Mexican forces were all in motion, and evidently preparing to make another attack upon us. When fairly out of the timber, we soon discovered that they had been heavily reinforced during the night. In fact, as we subsequently learned from the Mexicans themselves, a detachment of seven hundred and fifty cavalry and an artillery company had joined them shortly after their retreat to the timber. In the fight of the previous day they had no cannon.

They moved down upon us in four divisions, and when within five or six hundred yards, they unlimbered their field pieces (two brass nine pounders) and opened fire upon us. We did not return their fire, because as I have said, we had only one or two rounds of ammunition left for our cannon, and the distance was too great for small arms. Their shot, however, all went over us, and besides, the breast works we had thrown up would have protected us, even if their guns had been better aimed. We expected momentarily that the cavalry would charge us, but after firing several rounds from their nine pounders, an officer accompanied by a soldier bearing a white flag, rode out towards us, and by signs gave us to understand that he desired a "parley." Major Wallace and several other officers went out and met him about half way between our "fort" and the Mexican lines. The substance of the Mexican officer's communication (as I understood at the time) was to the effect "that Gen. Urrea, the commander of the Mexican forces, being anxious to avoid the useless shedding of blood (seeing we were now completely in his power), would guarantee to Col. Fannin and his men, on his word of honor as an officer and gentleman, that we would be leniently dealt with, provided we surrendered at *discretion*, without further attempt at hopeless resistance." When this message was delivered to Col. Fannin, he sent word back to the officer "to say to Gen. Urrea, it was a waste of time to discuss the subject of surrendering at *discretion*—that he would fight as long as there was a man left to fire a gun before he would surrender on such terms."

A little while afterwards the Mexicans again made a show of attacking us, but just as we were expecting them to charge, Gen. Urrea himself rode out in front of his lines accompanied by several of his officers and the soldier with the "white flag." Col. Fannin and Major Wallace went out to meet them, and the terms of capitulation were finally agreed upon, the most important of which was, that we should be held as prisoners of war until exchanged, or liberated on our parole of honor not to engage in the war again—at the option o the Mexican commander in chief. There were minor articles included in it, such as that our side arms should be retained, etc.

When the terms of capitulation had been fully decided upon, Gen. Urrea and his secretary and interpreter came into our lines with Col. Fannin, where it was reduced to writing, and an English translation given to Col. Fannin which was read to our men. I am thus particular in stating what I know to be the facts in regard to this capitulation, because I have seen it stated that Gen. Santa Anna always asserted there was no capitulation, and that Col. Fannin surrendered at discretion to Gen. Urrea. This assertion I have no doubt was made to justify as far as possible his order for the cold blooded murder of disarmed prisoners. Gen. Urrea, I believe, never denied the fact of the capitulation, and I have been informed, when the order was sent him by Santa Anna to execute the prisoners, he refused to carry it into effect, and turned over the command to a subaltern.

I have always believed myself that Gen. Urrea entered into the capitulation with Col. Fannin in good faith, and that the massacre of the prisoners, which took place some days afterwards, was by the express order of Santa Anna, and against the *remonstrances* of Gen. Urrea. If Gen. Urrea had intended to act treacherously, the massacre, in my opinion, would have taken place as soon as we had delivered up our arms, when we were upon an open prairie, surrounded by a large force of cavalry, where it would have been utterly impossible for a single soul to have escaped, and consequently he could then have given to the world his own version of the affair without fear of contradiction.

I have said nothing as yet of the Mexican loss in the fight and I cannot do so with any certainty, of my own knowledge; but there is no doubt it was much greater than ours. They told us after we had surrendered that we had killed and wounded several hundred. Dr. Joseph Barnard, our assistant surgeon, who was saved from the massacre to attend their wounded, told me afterwards that he was confident we had killed and wounded between three and four hundred, and his opportunities for forming a correct estimate of the number were certainly better than those of any one else.

After our surrender we were marched back to Goliad, escorted by a large detachment of cavalry, and there confined within the walls surrounding the old mission.

Among the Mexican officers there was a lieutenant by the name of Martinez, who had been educated at a Catholic college in Kentucky, where he had been a room-mate of a member of Capt. D——'s company, by the name of B——. Every day whilst we were prisoners he used to come and talk with B——, and professed his great regret to find him in such a situation, but he never gave him the slightest intimation of the treacherous designs of the Mexicans, nor, as far as I know, made the least effort to save his college room-mate.

CHAPTER VIII

MAJOR WARD AND HIS BATTALION BROUGHT TO GOLIAD—ALSO CAPT. MILLER AND HIS MEN—CONFINED IN THE OLD MISSION—MEXICAN SOLDIER ASTONISHED—TYRANICAL OFFICER—AN OFFICER TRYS TO MAKE A GOOD CATHOLIC OF ME, BUT FAILS—ORDERED TO COPANO—MARCHED OUT IN THREE DIVISIONS—THE MASSACRE—I NARROWLY ESCAPE THE BAYONET, SWIM THE RIVER AND HALT UPON THE OPPOSITE SIDE.

A day or so after our return as prisoners to Goliad, Maj. Ward and his battalion, or rather those who survived the engagement they had with the Mexicans, near Refugio, were brought in and confined with us, within the walls enclosing the old mission; and also a company of about eighty men under the command of Maj. Miller, who had been surprised and captured at Copano just after they had landed from their vessel. These men were also confined with us, but kept separate from the rest, and to distinguish them, each had a white cloth tied around one of his arms. At the time, I had no idea why this was done, but subsequently I learned the reason.

The morning of the sixth day after our return to Goliad, whether the Mexicans suspected we intended to rise upon the guard, or whether they merely wished to render our situation as uncomfortable as possible, I know not, but at any rate from that time we were confined in the old mission, where we were so crowded we had hardly room to lie down at night. Our rations too, about that time, had been reduced to five ounces of fresh beef a day, which we had to cook in the best way we could and eat without salt.

Although, thus closely confined and half starved, no personal indignity was ever offered to us to my knowledge, except on two occasions. Once a Mexican soldier pricked one of our men with his bayonet, because he did not walk quite fast enough to suit him, whereupon he turned and knocked the Mexican down with his fist. I fully expected to see him roughly handled for this "overt act," but the officer in command of the guard, who saw the affair, came up to him and patting him on the shoulder, told him he was "muy bravo," and that he had served the soldier exactly right. At another time one of our men was complaining to the officer of the guard of the ration issued to him, who ordered one of the soldiers to collect a quantity of bones and other offal lying around, and throwing them on the ground before the man, said, "There, eat as much as you want—good enough for Gringoes and heretics."

One day an officer who was passing, asked me some question in Spanish, and when I answered him in Spanish, he took a seat by me, and talked with me for some time. He asked me a great many questions about the United States, our form of government, the number of our regular army, what State I came from and what induced me to come to Texas, etc., to all of which I frankly answered. He expressed much astonishment at the correctness of my pronunciation, and asked where I had learned to speak Spanish, saying he was sure I had not learnt the language among the Mexicans. I told him I had studied Spanish under a teacher of modern languages at a Catholic institution in Kentucky. He then asked if I was a Catholic myself, and when I told him I was not, he seemed disappointed, and tried in various ways to get some sort of admission from me that I had more faith in the Catholic religion than any other.

The talk I had with this officer made but little impression upon me at the time, but I have since thought on account of my youth, or because I had in some way gained his favor, he was desirous of an excuse or pretext to save me from the fate he probably knew was in store for us. I know that several of our men were saved from the massacre, for no other reason that I am aware of, than that they *professsd* to be members of the Catholic church. Several times afterwards the officer above mentioned came to talk with me, and he insisted I was a Catholic if I would but own it; but I strenuously denied "the soft impeachment" to the last. If I had suspected his object in getting me to admit that I was a Catholic, it is probable I might have sought temporal as well as eternal safety the bosom of the church. It would have been very easy for me to have passed for a "good Catholic," for Catholicism (at least among the lower class of Mexicans) consists mainly in knowing how to make the sign of the cross, together with unbounded reverence first, for the Virgin Mary, and secondly, for the saints generally—and the priests. But I did not suspect the object this officer had in view when he tried to make a convert of me to the true faith, and I am afraid I have lost the only chance I shall ever have of becoming a "good Catholic."

On the morning of the 27th of March, a Mexican officer came to us and ordered us to get ready for a march. He told us we were to be liberated on "parole," and that arrangements had been made to send us to New Orleans on board of vessels then at Copano. This, you may be sure, was joyful news to us, and we lost no time in making preparations to leave our uncomfortable quarters. When all was ready we were formed into three divisions and marched out under a strong guard. As we passed by some Mexican women who were standing near the main entrance to the fort, I heard them say "pobrecitos" (poor fellows), but the incident at the time made but little impression on my mind.

One of our divisions was taken down the road leading to the lower ford of the river, one upon the road to San Patricio, and the division to which my company was attached, along the road leading to San Antonio. A strong guard accompanied us, marching in double files on both sides of our column. It occurred to me that this division of our men into three squads, and marching us off in three directions, was rather a singular maneuver, but still I had no suspicion of the foul play intended us. When about half a mile above town, a halt was made and the guard on the side next the river filed around to the opposite side. Hardly had this maneuver been executed, when I heard a heavy firing of musketry in the directions taken by the other two divisions. Some one near me exclaimed "Boys! they are going to shoot us!" and at the same instant I heard the clicking of musket locks all along the Mexican line. I turned to look, and as I did so, the Mexicans fired upon us, killing probably one hundred out of the one hundred and fifty men in the division. We were in double file and I was in the rear rank. The man in front of me was shot dead, and in falling he knocked me down. I did not get up for a moment, and when I rose to my feet, I found that the whole Mexican line had charged over me, and were in hot pursuit of those who had not been shot and who were fleeing towards the river about five hundred yards distant. I followed on after them, for I knew that escape in any other direction (all open prairie) would be impossible, and I had nearly reached the river before it became necessary to make my way through the Mexican line ahead. As I did so, one of the soldiers charged upon me with his bayonet (his gun I suppose being empty). As he drew his musket back to make a lunge at me, one of our men coming from another direction, ran between us, and the bayonet was driven through his body. The blow was given with such force, that in falling, the man probably wrenched or tiwsted the bayonet in such a way as to prevent the Mexican from withdrawing it immediately. I saw him put his foot upon the man, and make an ineffectual attempt to extricate the bayonet from his body, but one look satisfied me, as I was somewhat in a hurry just then, and I hastened to the bank of the river and plunged in. The river at that point was deep and swift, but not wide, and being a good swimmer, I soon gained the opposite bank, untouched by any of the bullets that were pattering in the water around my head. But here I met with an unexpected difficulty. The bank on that side was so steep I found it was impossible to climb it, and I continued to swim down the river until I came to where a grape vine hung from the bough of a leaning tree nearly to the surface of the water. This I caught hold of and was climbing up it hand over hand, sailor fashion, when a Mexican on the opposite bank fired at me with his escopeta, and with so true an aim, that he cut the vine in two just above my head, and down I came into the water again. I then swam on about a hundred yards further, when I came to a place where the bank was not quite so steep, and with some difficulty I managed to clamber up.

CHAPTER IX.

HEADED OFF BY A PARTY OF LANCERS—WITNESS THE MURDER OF FIVE OR SIX OF OUR MEN—DODGE THE LANCERS AND FINALLY ESCAPE—HIDE IN GROVE OF TIMBER TILL NIGHT—EXECUTION OF COL. FANNIN—WONDERFUL ESCAPE OF WM. HUNTER.

The river on the north side was bordered by timber several hundred yards in width, through which I quickly passed and I was just about to leave it and strike out into the open prairie, when I discovered a party of lancers nearly in front of me, sitting on their horses, and evidently stationed there to intercept any one who should attempt to escape in that direction. I halted at once under cover of the timber, through which I could see the lancers in the open prairie, but which hid me entirely from their view.

Whilst I was thus waiting and undecided as to the best course to pursue under the circumstances, I saw a young man by the name of Holliday, one of my own messmates, passing through the timber above me in a course that would have taken him out at the point directly opposite to which the lancers were stationed. I called to him as loudly as I dared and fortunately, being on the "qui vive," he heard me, and stopped far enough within the timber to prevent the lancers from discovering him. I then pulled off a fur cap I had on, and beckoned to him with it. This finally drew his attention to me, and as soon as he saw me he came to where I was standing, from whence, without being visible to them, the lancers could be plainly seen.

A few moments afterwards we were joined by a young man by the name of Brown, from Georgia, who had just swam the river, and had accidentally stumbled on the place where Holliday and I were holding a "council of war" as to what was the best course to pursue. Holliday, although a brave man, was very much excited, and had lost to some extent his presence of mind, for he proposed we should leave the timber at once and take the chances of evading the lancers we saw on the prairie. I reasoned with him on the folly of such a proceeding, and told him it would be impossible for us to escape in the open prairie from a dozen men on horseback. "But," said Holliday, "the Mexicans are crossing the river behind us, and they will soon be here." "That may be," I replied, "but they are not here yet, and in the mean time something may turn up to favor our escape." Brown took the same view of the case I did, and Holliday's wild proposition to banter a dozen mounted men for a race on the open prairie was "laid upon the table."

Whilst we were debating this (to us) momentous question, some four or five of our men passed out of the timber before we saw them, into the open prairie, and when they discovered the lancers it was to late. The lancers charged upon them at once, speared them to death, and then dismounting robbed them of such things as they had upon their persons. From where we stood the whole proceeding was plainly visible to us, and as may be imagined, it was not calculated to encourage any hopes we might have had of making our escape. However, after the lancers had plundered the men they had just murdered, they remounted, and in a few moments set off in a rapid gallop down the river to where it is probable they had discovered other fugitives coming out of the timber. We at once seized the opportunity thus afforded us to leave the strip of timber which we knew could give us shelter but for a few moments longer, and started out, taking advantage of a shallow ravine which partially hid us from view. We had scarcly gone two hundred yards from the timber, when we saw the lancers gallop back and take up their position at the same place they had previously occupied. Strange to say, however, they never observed us, although we were in plain view of them for more than a quarter of a mile, without a single brush or tree to screen us.

We traveled about five or six miles and stopped in a thick grove to rest ourselves, where we staid until night. All day long we heard at intervals irregular discharges of musketry in the distance, indicating, as we supposed, where fugitives from the massacre were overtaken and shot by the pursuing parties of Mexicans.

As the undergrowth was pretty dense in the grove where we had stopped, we concluded the chances of being picked up by one of these pursuing parties would be greater if we traveled on than if we remained where we were, and we determined to "lie by" until night. In talking the matter over and reflecting upon the many narrow risks we had run in making our escape, we came to the conclusion that in all probability we were the only survivors of the hundreds who had that morning been led out to slaughter; although in fact as we subsequently learned, twenty-five or thirty of our men eventually reached the settlements on the Brazos. Drs. Shackleford and Barnard, our surgeons, were saved from the massacre to attend upon Mexicans wounded in the fight on the Coletto, and when their forces retreated from Goliad after the battle of San Jacinto these were taken to San Antonio, where they were ultimately liberated. Our own wounded men, or rather those of them that survived up to the time of the massacre, were carried out into the open square of the fort, and there cruelly butchered by the guard. Capt. Miller and his men were saved, because, as I was subsequently informed, they had been captured soon after they landed from their vessel, without any arms, and of course without making any resistance.

Col. Fannin, who was confined to his quarters by a wound he had received at the fight on the Coletto, soon after the massacre of his men, was notified to prepare for immediate execution. He merely observed that he was ready then, as he had no desire to live after the cold-blooded, cowardly murder of his men. He was thereupon taken out to the square by a guard, where he was seated on a bench, and his eyes blindfolded. A moment before the order to "fire" was given, I was told (though I cannot vouch for the truth of the statement) he drew a fine gold watch from his pocket, and handing it to the officer in command of the guard, requested him as a last favor to order his men to shoot him in the breast and not in the head. The officer took the watch, and immediately ordered the guard to fire at his head. Col. Fannin fell dead and his body was thrown into one of the ravines near the fort. Thus died as brave a son of Georgia as ever came from that noble old State.

The escape of Wm. Hunter was most wonderful. At the first fire he fell pierced by a musket ball. A Mexican soldier thinking he was not quite dead, cut his throat with a butcher knife, but not deep enough to sever the jugular vein, stabbed him with his bayonet, and then beat him over the head with the breech of his musket, until he was satisfied his bloody work was accomplished. He then stripped him of his clothing and left him for dead upon the ground where he had fallen. Hunter laid there in a perfectly unconscious state until dark, but after night came on, the cool air and dew revived him, and by degrees he regained his senses. For a time all that had occurred since morning appeared like a troubled dream to him, but gradually the reality of the events that had taken place forced itself upon his mind, and he cautiously raised his head to reconnoitre. All was still around, and not a moving, living creature was visible, nothing but the pallid upturned faces of his murdered comrades dimly seen in the waning light of day. He found himself extremely weak from loss of blood, and his limbs were sore and stiffened; but he was suffering intensely from thirst, and he resolved, if possible, to drag himself to the river. With much pain and difficulty, he succeeded in reaching the water, and after quenching his thirst, he bound up his wounds as well as he could with strips of cloth torn from his shirt.

Before daylight he had recovered his strength so far that he was able to swim the river, and took his way to a Mexican ranch on the Manahuila creek, with the people of which he had had some previous acquaintance, thinking it was better to trust himself to their tender mercies than to attempt to travel through a wilderness in his wounded and weakened condition.

When near the ranch he met a Mexican woman, who told him he would certainly be killed if he went there. She advised him to secrete himself in a thicket she designated, and told him as soon as it was dark she would come out to him and bring him some food and clothing. Hunter had his suspicions that she intended to betray him, yet there was no alternative but to trust her, and he hid himself in the thicket she had pointed out to him, and anxiously awaited her reappearance. True to her promise, a little while after dark, she returned, bringing some provisions and water, together with a suit of Mexican clothes.

For nearly a week this Mexican woman came to his place of concealment every night, fed him and dressed his wounds until he was sufficiently restored to travel. She then supplied him with as much provisions as he could carry and also a flint and steel for making fire, and bidding him "adios" she returned to the ranch.

Thus recruited and supplied with clothing and provisions, Hunter took his course through the wilderness, and having a pretty good idea of the "lay of the land," after many narrow escapes he eventually made his way to the Texan army under General Houston.

CHAPTER X.

TAKE THE ROAD AGAIN—INDIAN SIGN—NARROW ESCAPE FROM LANCERS—SUFFERING FROM HUNGER—LOST AND TAKE THE BACK TRAIL—RETURN NEARLY TO GOLIAD—MAKE A FRESH START AND HOLLIDAY TAKES THE LEAD AND AGAIN GOES WRONG—I REBEL—DISAGREEMENT IN CAMP, COMPROMISE, AND I FINALLY LEAD THE WAY.

As soon as it was dark we left our hiding place and set out in a northeasterly direction, as nearly as we could determine, and traveled until daylight, when we stopped an hour or so in a grove to rest. We then proceeded on our course again till near sunset, when we encamped in a thick "mot" of timber without water. An unusually cold norther for the season of the year was blowing, and a steady drizzling rain was falling when we stopped. Brown, who had pulled off his coat and shoes before he swam the San Antonio river, suffered severely, and I was apprehensive, should we be exposed all night to such weather without a fire, that he would freeze to death. I had a little tinder box in my pocket containing a flint and steel, but all the tinder there was in it was a small piece not much larger than a pin head.

This I carefully placed on a batch of cotton taken from the lining of my fur cap, and after many unsuccessful efforts I managed at last to ignite it. With this we started a fire, and then the first thing I did was to tear off a portion from my drawers, which I partially burned, thus securing a good supply of tinder for future use. Before going to sleep we collected fuel enough to last until daylight, with which we occasionally replenished the fire so that we passed the night in tolerable comfort.

The next morning Brown, who as I have previously stated, had pulled off his coat and shoes and thrown them away when he swam the river, found himself so sore and crippled he was unable to travel. The prairie we had passed over the day before, had been recently burned off and the sharp points of the stubble had lacerated his naked feet dreadfully. It was evident he could not go on without some sort of covering for his feet. I cut off the legs of my boots, and with a pair of scissors which he happened to have in his pocket, and some twine, I contrived to make him a pair of sandals, such as I had seen worn by Mexican soldiers. After thus shoeing him (by way of remuneration, I suppose,) Brown separated the two blades of the scissors and gave me one of them, which was of great service to me, for by whetting it on stones I gave it an edge, and it answered pretty well in place of a knife.

The grove of timber in which we had passed the night, covered perhaps an acre of ground, and just outside of it there was a strip of sandy soil almost bare of grass. In the morning when we left the grove we observed a good many fresh mocassin tracks which must have been made during the night by a party of Indians, who probably had been drawn to the locality by the light from our fire. Why they did not attack us I cannot imagine, unless it was because they were ignorant of our number and that we were without arms. At any rate, but for their tracks in the sand we would not have known they had been around our camp during the night.

The next morning we set out, as we supposed, in the direction we had traveled the day before, and in about one hour we came to some timber, bordering upon what I thought was one of the branches of the Coletto creek. Here we laid ourselves down on the grass to rest for a few moments, and scarcely had we done so when a party of ten Mexican lancers made their appearance, riding along a trail that ran within fifty yards of where we were lying. As luck would have it, just as they came opposite to where we were, they met another soldier and stopped to have a talk with him. For nearly an hour, it seemed to me, but in fact, I suppose, for only a few minutes, they sat on their horses conversing together within a few paces of where we were lying, and without a single bush or tree intervening to hide us from their view, but fortunately they never looked toward us or we would inevitably have been discovered. At length they rode on, and we were very glad when we lost sight of them behind a point of timber.

The weather still continued cloudy and drizzly, and not being able to see the sun we had nothing to guide us, and in consequence were doubtful as to whether or not we were pursuing the right course. However, we traveled on until night, and again encamped in a thick grove of timber. Having eaten nothing since we left Goliad, and only a small piece of beef for two days previously, we had begun to suffer severely from the pangs of hunger. Game we had everywhere seen in the greatest abundance, but having no guns, the sight of herds of deer and flocks of wild turkeys, suggestive as they were to our minds of juicy steaks and roasts, only served to aggravate the cravings of our appetite. It was at a season of the year, too, when no berries or wild fruits were to be found, and the pecans and other nuts had fallen and been destroyed by wild hogs, deer and other animals. But in spite of our hunger we slept pretty well on our beds of dry leaves, except that we were occasionally aroused from our slumbers by the howling of wolves, which were sometimes so impudent as to approach within a few paces of the fire about which we were lying.

In the morning the weather was still cloudy and cold, and we set out again upon our travels. Holliday being by several years the oldest of our party, had heretofore taken the lead to which Brown and I had made no opposition, but after an hour or so I was convinced he was leading us in the wrong direction, and in this opinion I was confirmed when in a little while we came to a creek I was pretty sure was the Manahuila, the same we had crossed the day after leaving Goliad. I told Holliday I was confident he was taking the back track, but he thought not, and so we kept on until toward evening, when we came to several groves of live oak timber which I remembered having seen when hunting in the vicinity of Goliad. Holliday, however, had but little faith in my recollections of the locality, and proposed that Brown and myself should wait in one of these groves until he reconnoitered the country ahead, and we consented to do so.

In about an hour he returned and told us that he had been in sight of Goliad, and that he had ditinctly heard the beating of drums and the bugle calls of cavalry in the town. We felt very much discouraged, as may well be supposed, to find ourselves, after traveling so long, almost at the same point we had started from; but it was useless to repine, and we set out again in the right direction, Holliday, as usual, leading the way. After an hour or so I found that Holliday was gradually turning his course toward Goliad again. Time with us was too precious to be wasted. I came to a halt and told Holliday I would follow him no farther. He insisted he was going the right direction, and I as positively that he was going directly contrary to the course we ought to pursue. He was obstinate, and so was I. Holliday, I knew, had been born and raised in a city whilst I had lived the greater part of my life on the frontier, and had been accustomed to the woods ever since I was old enough to carry a gun. Besides, I knew that I possessed to a considerable degree what frontiersmen call "hog-knowledge," by which is meant a kind of instinctive knowledge that enables some people to steer their way through pathless woods and prairies without a compass or any landmarks to guide them. I therefore told Holliday, if he persisted in traveling in the direction he was going, we would certainly have to part company, although I was very loath to do so under the circumstances. Thereupon and without further parley I turned and took the opposite course to the one we had been traveling. Brown, who made no pretensions to being a woodman, followed me, for the reason, I suppose, that he had lost confidence in Holliday as a guide, and thought possibly I might do better. Holliday remained standing where we had left him, apparently undetermined what to do, until we had gone perhaps a hundred yards, when he turned and followed us. As he came up he merely said that he would rather go wrong than part company, and no allusion afterwards was made to the subject,—but from that time on I always took the lead as a matter of *course.*

Recrossing the Manahuila creek, and night coming on shortly afterwards, we encamped by the side of a pool of water in a thick "island" of timber. By this time we were suffering greatly with hunger, nevertheless I slept soundly through the night, although in my slumbers I was constantly tantalized by dreams of juicy steaks, hot biscuits and butter, etc., which always mysteriously disappeared when I attempted to "grab" them.

CHAPTER XI.

Great Suffering from Hunger—"Turks Heads" a Substitute for Water—Reach the Guadalupe River—Unsuccessful Attempt to get Veal Steaks, but Caught the Pigs and ate Five for Supper—Indians—Mexican Lion.

The next morning we again took our course across the prairie, but owing to the rank growth of grass with which in many parts it was covered, and our increasing weakness, our progress was slow and painful. On the way, Holliday found about a dozen wild onions, which he divided with Brown and myself; but the quantity for each was so small that it seemed only to aggravate the pangs of hunger. During the day, we saw in the distance several parties of Mexicans or Indians, we could not tell which, as they only came near enough for us to see that they were men on horseback.

That night we again encamped in a strip of woods bordering a small creek, but we slept very little on account of our sufferings from hunger, which had now become excrutiating. The next morning Brown was so weak he could scarcely walk two hundred yards without stopping to rest, nevertheless we went on as fast as we could travel. A part of the way was over high rolling prairie, on which no water could be found, and the pangs of thirst were added to those of hunger, until alleviated by the juice of some "Turks heads" which we found growing on the top of a pebbly knoll. These plants are, I believe, a species of the cactus, about the size of a large turnip, grow on top of the ground, and are protected on the outside by a number of tough, horny prickles. The inside is filled with a spongy substance, which when pressed yields a quantity of tasteless juice that answers as a tolerable substitute for water.

The evening of the fifth day after leaving Goliad, we descried a long line of timber ahead of us, and just before sunset we came to a large stream, which from my knowledge of the geography of the country I was sure must be the Guadalupe. At the point where we struck it, the prairie extended up to the bank, which was high and very steep. A few hundred yards above us we saw a cow and her calf grazing near the edge of the bluff, and approaching them cautiously we attempted to drive them over it, hoping that one or the other would be disabled or killed by the fall, but after several ineffectual efforts to force them to take the leap, they finally broke through our line and made their way to the prairie, taking with them some steaks we stood very much in need of.

Completely exhausted by our exertions, and suffering extremely from hunger, we looked around for a suitable place to camp, as it was now nearly night, and coming to a pit or sink twelve or fourteen feet deep, which would protect us from the cold wind blowing at the time, we built a fire at the bottom, laid down upon the leaves, and in a little while we all went to sleep. How long I had slept I do not know, but I was at length aroused from my slumbers by a rattling among the sticks and dry leaves above me, and looking up I discovered a wild sow with her litter of pigs coming down the almost perpendicular bank of the sink. I silently grasped a billet of wood lying near me, and awaited their approach. The old sow came on, totally unsuspicious that three ravenous chaps were occupying her bed at the bottom (for by this time our fire had burnt out), and when she and her pigs were in striking distance I suddenly sprang up and began a vigorous assault upon the pigs. The noise aroused Brown and Holliday, and comprehending at once the state of affairs they sprang to my assistance, and before the sow and her pigs could make their escape up the steep sides of the pit we had "bagged" five of the latter. We made a desperate attack on the old sow also, but weak as we were from starvation, and with our inefficient weapons, she routed us completely, leaving us however in possession of the field and the "spoils of war." We immediately started our fire again, and with no other preparation than a slight roasting on the coals, enough to singe off their hair, we very expediously disposed of the *five* pigs we had killed—nearly a pig and a half for each one, but then you must remember that they were small sucking pigs, and that we had not had a mouthful to eat for five days except a handful of wild onions. Greatly refreshed by our supper of scorched pig, we laid down again upon the leaves at the bottom of the sink, and slept soundly until the sun was an hour or so high.

As soon as we awoke, we left the sink and went out to make a reconnoisance of the river, to see what the chances were for crossing it. Though not very wide at that point, we soon perceived we had a difficult job to undertake, for the river was much swollen by recent rains, and its turbid waters were rushing along at a rapid rate. Holliday and I were both good swimmers, and I felt sure we could reach the opposite bank safely; but I had my doubts about Brown. He was a poor swimmer, and consequently was timid in water. However, there was no alternative but to make the attempt, and we therefore stripped off our clothes, tied them in a bundle on our heads to keep them as dry as possible, and plunged in the turbid flood. Holliday and I soon reached the opposite bank, but hardly had we done so when I heard Brown cry out for help, and looking back I saw that he was still some distance from the shore, and evidently just on the eve of going under. At the very point where I landed there happened to be a slab of dry timber lying near the water, which I instantly seized, and swimming with it to the place where Brown was struggling to keep his head above the surface, I pushed the end of the slab to him, which he grasped and to which he held on with the usual tenacity of a drowning man, and with the assistance of Holliday I at last got him to the shore and dragged him out of the water. It was very fortunate for Brown that Holliday and I, between us, had taken his clothes, as otherwise no doubt he would have lost them all.

Continuing our course, we passed through a heavily timbered bottom more than a mile wide, and then came to a large prairie in which we saw many herds of deer and some antelopes. The antelope is a beautiful animal about the size of a deer, but much more fleet. They do not run as deer do, by springs or bounds, but evenly, like the horse. Their horns consist of two curved shafts, with a single prong to each. A man on a good saddle horse can easily overtake a fat deer on the prairie, but it would require a thorough bred racer with a light rider to come up with an antelope.

We also saw to-day a party of Indians on horses, but we eluded them by concealing ourselves in some tall grass that grew in the bottom of a ravine. About dusk we came to the timber on the farther side of the prairie, in which we encamped under the spreading branches of a live oak tree.

Next morning we continued our route, and after passing through some open post oak woods, we came to a small stream not more than knee deep, and of course easily forded. Crossing this stream, we went through more post oak woods, and then entered another large prairie, and it was late in the evening, owing to the difficulty of making our way through tall and tangled grass, before we reached the timber on the opposite side, where we encamped in a little open space surrounded by a dense growth of underwood. Here we made a fire, and slept soundly till morning.

As soon as daylight appeared we were off again, and passing through a skirt of woods we came to another small stream, which was also fordable. Crossing it, we entered a large prairie, on the opposite side of which a long line of timber was dimly visible in the distance. All day long, stopping occasionally to rest, we toiled through the matted grass with which this prairie was covered, and just at sunset we came to the woods we had seen, where we encamped near a pool of water. Whilst collecting a supply of fuel for the night, I came upon a heap of brush and leaves, and scraping off the top to see what was beneath, I discovered about half the carcass of a deer which apparently had been recently killed and partly eaten by a panther or Mexican lion, and the remainder "cached" in this heap for future use. Of course, under the circumstances, I had no scruples about appropriating the venison, and calling Brown and Holliday to my assistance we carried it to camp, where, after cutting off the ragged and torn portions of the meat, we soon had the balance spitted before a blazing fire. After making a hearty supper on our stolen venison, we raked a quantity of dry leaves close to the fire and "turned into bed."

During the night, at various times, we heard the roaring of a Mexican lion (very probably the lawful owner of the larder that had supplied us with supper), and for fear he might be disposed to make a meal of one of us in place of venison, we took good care not to let our fire burn down too low. There is no animal, I believe, on the American continent, with the exception of the grizzly bear, that has ever been known to attack a man sleeping near a fire. The Mexican lion is, I think, described in books of natural history under the name of puma or South American lion. They are of a tawny or dun color, about the size of the East Indian tiger, have a large round head and a short mane upon the neck. Their nails are very long, sharp and crooked—coming to an edge on the inner side—as keen as that of a knife. Their roar is very similar to that of the African lion. They are fierce and strong, but cowardly; although when pressed by hunger, they have been known to attack men in open daylight. One instance of this comes within my own knowledge. Several teamsters, with their wagons, were traveling the road from San Antonio to Victoria, and a teamster needing a staff for his ox whip, went to a thicket eighty or a hundred yards from the road to cut one; whilst occupied in cutting down a small sapling with his pocket knife, a Mexican lion stealthily crawled up behind him and sprang upon him before he was aware of its presence. The man's cries for help were heard by one of the teamsters, who hurried to his assistance. The only thing he had in the shape of a weapon was his ox whip, but with that he boldly attacked the lion, which, frightened by his approach and the loud popping of the whip, let go its prey and made a rapid retreat, but the poor fellow he had caught was dreadfully bitten and torn, and it was a long time before his wounds were healed. The Mexican lion is now rarely seen in Texas except among the dense chapparals between the Nueces and Rio Grande rivers.

CHAPTER XII.

The Lavaca river—Mexican marauders—Brown and myself temporarily captured—attempt to escape—I succeed but Brown is recaptured—I pass a lonely night in the Lavaca bottom—take the prairie again solitary and alone—sleep once more under a roof.

As soon as it was fairly light we again started, and passing through a heavily timbered bottom, came to the Lavaca or Cow river, a small stream about thirty yards wide where we struck it. In going through the bottom we noticed several piles of rails and some clapboards, the first indications we had seen of settlements since we left Goliad. We also saw a drove of hogs in the bottom, which confirmed us in the opinion that there had been an American settlement somewhere in the vicinity. These hogs were of the genuine "razorback" species, and as wild and fleet as deer; consequently, although our hunger was almost as pressing as ever, we did not care to exhaust our strength in what we knew would be a hopeless attempt to capture one of them.

We swam the river without difficulty, and stopped an hour or so on the bank to rest ourselves and dry our clothes. We then went on, but as the bottom on that side was very wide, and the day being cloudy, we lost our way and it was nearly sunset when we reached the open prairie. A few hundred yards below where we came out of the timber we observed ten or a dozen horses "staked," and, on approaching them, we heard people talking in the woods near by. I advised an immediate retreat from the locality, but for some reason Holliday came to the conclusion that the horses belonged to a company of Texan scouts, and proposed that we conceal ourselves in a clump of bushes from whence we could see any one who might come to look after them and thus satisfy ourselves without running any risk as to whether the owners were Americans or Mexicans. Holliday's counsel prevailed, and Brown and I hid ourselves in a small bunch of bushes and Holliday in another. A dog which was at the camp, all this time kept up an incessant barking, and probably it aroused the suspicions of the owners that some one was trying to steal their horses; at any rate, in a few moments after we had hidden ourselves, a strapping "ranchero" came out of the timber, and when he had looked to see if the horses had been disturbed in any way, he came as straight as he could walk to the bunch of bushes in which Brown and myself had taken our position and was just on the eve of entering it when he saw us. He instantly sprang back exclaiming, "Hey! Americanos! What are you doing here? Do you want to steal our horses?" He then made signs for us to follow him, which we did, knowing that resistance, weak as we were and without arms, would be useless, and that one shout from the ranchero would bring those in camp to his assistance. Holliday, as I have said, was concealed in a separate clump of bushes, and, keeping quiet, the ranchero did not discover him. Brown and I got up and followed him, but I was fully determined from the start not to follow him as far as his camp. I saw that his course would take him very close at one point to the timbered bottom, and as we went along Brown and I agreed upon a plan to escape from our captor, which was to follow him quietly until near the timber, and then suddenly "break ranks" and get under cover as speedily as possible. Then we were to take different directions and meet at the same place the next morning. The ranchero, although he could plainly see that Brown and I were unarmed, kept some paces ahead of us all the time, every now and then looking back to see if we were following. Before Brown and I separated I told him I would meet him at the Mexican camp the next morning, as it was probable they would leave it before we could return there.

In pursuance of our plan, as soon as we came very close to the edge of the timber, we suddenly left our ranchero without even saying "adios," and in a moment we were hidden from his sight by the dense undergrowth. When we thus so unceremoniously left our new acquaintance we were so near the camp that we could plainly hear the rancheros conversing with each other, and the moment we made a "break" our escort shouted to his companions to hasten to his assistance. "Here are Americans, come quick and bring your guns," but just at this juncture Brown and I had some little matters of our own that required immediate despatch, and we did not wait for the Mexicans "to come and bring their guns with them." Brown went one way and I another as soon as we entered the timber, and I never saw him again until several weeks afterwards when he came to the army on the Brazos.

The sun had just set when we entered the timber, and night soon set in dark and cloudy. After going perhaps a mile, I concluded it would be impossible for the Mexicans to find me and I pitched my camp, which was speedily done by pitching myself on the ground at the foot of a tree on which there was a thick growth of Spanish moss, that served to protect me in a measure from a drizzling rain that commenced falling. I did not dare to start a fire for fear the light from it might bring the Mexicans to the locality, should they be in pursuit.

I had never felt so despondent since making my escape from Goliad as I did that night. My separation from my companions, my uncertainty as to their fate, the thought of my helpless situation, without arms of any kind to protect myself against the attacks of wild beasts and still more merciless Mexicans and Indians, together with the mournful howling of wolves in the distance, all conspired to fill my mind with gloomy forebodings and anticipations. However, notwithstanding such unpleasant thoughts and surroundings, I soon fell asleep and slept soundly until morning.

When I awoke day was beginning to break, birds were singing and squirrels chattering in the trees. The rain had ceased, and after brushing off the damp leaves that adhered to my clothes, my toilet was made, and I started back in the direction of the place where Brown and I had separated. I came out of the bottom very near the place where I had entered it the evening before, but no living thing was visible on the prairie as far as I could see, except some herds of deer and a flock of wild turkeys. I proceeded cautiously along the edge of the timber until I came to where the Mexicans had staked their horses. They were gone, and hearing no sounds from the woods in which they had camped, I ventured in to reconnoitre. Their fires were still burning, but the camp was deserted and there was nothing left to indicate the probable fate of my companions.

I was exceedingly hungry, and I searched the camp closely, hoping the Mexicans might have forgotten some remnant of their provisions when they went off, but I found no vestiges of eatables of any kind except a few egg shells. Leaving the camp, I returned to the prairie and traveled up and down the timber above and below it for several miles hoping to meet with one or the other of my companions. I continued my search for them until late in the evening, when having abandoned all hopes of finding them, I struck out across the prairie in the direction I intended going. Before I had gone a quarter of a mile I happened to look back towards the river and saw a house that had been hidden from my view, when searching for my companions, by a strip of timber. As I was suffering much from hunger, I concluded to return and make an examination of this house and premises, hoping I might find something to eat.

I approached the house cautiously for fear it might be occupied by a marauding party of Mexicans, but seeing nothing to excite my suspicions, I ventured up. Everything about the house—furniture broken and strewn in fragments over the floor, beds ripped open and their contents scattered around, plainly indicated that it had been visited by some plundering band of rancheros or Indians. However, in an outhouse near the main building, I found a piece of bacon and four or five ears of corn. The corn, I ground upon a steel mill that was fastened to a post in the yard, and starting a fire in one of the chimneys of the main building, I very soon prepared a substantial meal of "ask cake" and broiled bacon, to which I paid my sincere respects. By this time night had set in, and, spreading some tattered bed clothes left in the house upon the floor, I slept comfortably until morning.

CHAPTER XIII

UNSUCCESSFUL SEARCH FOR MY COMPANIONS—BROWN RECAPTURED—FINALLY RELEASED AND MAKES HIS WAY SAFELY TO THE ARMY—HOLLIDAY PURSUED BY A PARTY OF MEXICANS—CAPTURED BY TWO RUNAWAY NEGROES—THEY DETERMINE TO KILL HIM, BUT HE TALKS THEM OUT OF THE NOTION—ARRIVES SAFELY AT COLUMBIA—HIS SUBSEQUENT FATE—I SET OUT AGAIN "SOLITARY AND ALONE"—TRAILED BY INDIANS, BUT I GIVE THEM THE DODGE.

The next morning, after making a hearty breakfast on ash cake and bacon, as there was no urgent necessity for hurrying forward, I concluded I would make another attempt to find my companions, and I again traveled for several miles above and below, along the edge of the timber, but seeing nothing of them I at length became satisfied that they had been captured by the Mexicans, or had gone on without waiting for me. The facts were, however, as I afterwards learned from both of them when I subsequently met them on the Brazos, about as follows: After Brown and I broke away from the ranchero and went off in different directions, he pursued Brown, came up with him and took him back to the camp. There they tied him securely to a tree, and then proceeded leisurely to cook and eat their supper. Brown, who could speak a little Spanish, told them he was starving and begged them to give him something to eat, but they said it was useless to do so as they intended to shoot him in the morning. He then told them if such was their intention to shoot him at once and not keep him tied up to a tree like a dog all night, but the Mexicans paid no attention to his request and when they had finished their supper, they laid down upon their blankets and went to sleep. Brown tried his best to untie himself, but the ranchero had fastened him so securely to the tree that he found it impossible to get loose, and was compelled to remain in a standing position all night.

The next morning, as soon as it was fairly light, one of the rancheros walked up to Brown and pinned a piece of white cloth to his breast, telling him it was a mark for them to shoot at. Four or five rancheros then stationed themselves a few paces in front of him, cocked their guns and presented them as if about to shoot. All this time, Brown, who had been rendered perfectly desperate by pain and hunger, was cursing the Mexicans as much as his imperfect knowlege of the language would permit. He told them they were a set of cowardly scoundrels, and that the bravest feat they had ever performed was the murder of unarmed and helpless prisoners, and so on. Brown said he was suffering and had suffered so excruciatingly from pain and hunger all night that he really wanted the Mexicans to shoot him and put him out of his misery, but they seemed much astonished at his boldness and sang froid, and the one in command of the party came to where he was tied, cut the ropes and told him to go, that he was "muy bravo" (very brave), and that in place of shooting him they would leave him to perish of hunger. Then they saddled their horses and mounting them rode off. Some days afterwards Brown was again captured by a party of Mexicans, but in some way he managed to escape from them, and finally, more by good luck than anything else, for he was a poor woodman, he made his way to the army on the Brazos.

Holliday, as I have before stated, was not seen when the ranchero captured Brown and myself, and as soon as it was dark he left his hiding place and took his course across the prairie. Subsequently he had many narrow escapes from marauding parties of Mexicans and Indians. On one occasion a party of Mexicans pursued him so closely that he took refuge in a lake. He waded on until the water was up to his neck, when the Mexicans amused themselves for some time by firing off their scopets at his head, but fortunately for Holliday night came on, and under cover of the darkness he skipped out and dodged his pursuers.

Another time, two runaway negro men caught him in a house to which he had gone in search of something to eat. They asked him if he was a Texan, and upon his replying in the affirmative they told him they intended to kill him. Whereupon they tied him securely in the room and went out, but in a few moments returned, each one with a heavy club in his hand, and they told him to say his prayers speedily, as they were going to beat out his brains. Holliday, however, "reasoned" the matter with them, telling them it wasn't fair to kill *him* for what other white men might have done to them—that he had never injured them in any way, etc. His talk seemed to produce some effect upon one of the negroes, but the other still insisted on killing him. Finally, however, the one who was inclined to favor him prevailed upon the other to abandon his intention of beating out his brains, and they said they would not kill him but would take him to the camp of some Mexican guerrillas near by. Holliday thought that this would be worse than "jumping out of the frying pan into the fire;" that such a proceeding would not be better than having his brains knocked out,—and he urged all the arguments he could think of against it. At length, much to Holliday's relief, they agreed to let him go, and before they left they not only gave him provisions, but directions that enabled him to make his way through an unknown country to the Texan army under General Houston. He came into Columbia, on the Brazos, about ten days after I did. Holliday was subsequently appointed to a captaincy in the Texas regular army, was again taken prisoner in the unfortunate Santa Fe expedition, carried to the City of Mexico, and, after his liberation, died of yellow fever on the voyage from Vera Cruz to New Orleans, and was buried at sea.

Giving up all hopes of finding my companions, I started out across the large prairie that extended in the direction I was going as far as my eye could reach. The game on this prairie was more abundant than I had seen it elsewhere. I am sure that frequently there were a thousand deer in sight at a time. Here, too, I first saw the pinnated grouse, or prairie hen. At first I supposed the call of the cock was the distant lowing of wild cattle, some of which were grazing on the prairie. Wild turkeys were also numerous, and so unused to the sight of man, that they permitted me at times to approach within a few paces of them.

During the day I saw several parties of Mexicans or Indians on horses, but they did not come near me. About three o'clock in the evening I reached the timber on the Navidad, where I stopped to rest a while and lunch on some of the ash cake and bacon I had brought along with me. I then proceeded on my course through the bottom, and after going probably half a mile I came to the Navidad river, at that place thirty or forty yards wide. It was swollen by recent rains and not fordable, so I was compelled to swim it, which I did easily, stripping of my clothes and tying them on a piece of dry wood, and pushing it before me as I swam.

As soon as I reached the bank I dressed myself and continued my course through the bottom, which was much wider on that side. I had gone perhaps half a mile, when my attention was drawn to the continuous barking of a dog in the direction from which I had come. At first I did not notice it particularly, supposing it was some dog left behind by the settlers on the Navidad when they fled from the invading Mexican army. But at length I observed that although I was traveling at a pretty rapid walk the barking of this dog seemed to be nearer and nearer to me, and I supected he was trailing me and that probably there was some one with him. I therefore hurried on as fast as possible, and in an hour or so came to the open prairie on the north side of the river. All this time I could hear the baying of the dog at apparently about the same distance behind me as when I first noticed it. I was sure then he was trailing me, and never halted for a moment, but continued on my course into the prairie for several hundred yards and then turned short round and retraced my steps to the edge of the timber, where I sprang as far as I could to one side and went down the edge of the timber about a hundred yards to a fallen tree, among the limbs of which I concealed myself, and from whence I could have a distinct view of anything coming out of the bottom at the point I left it.

After I had thus "holed" myself, the barking of the dog grew louder and nearer every moment, and in a little while I saw the dog, followed by three Indians, emerge from the timber, precisely at the point where I had left it.. One of the Indians held the dog by a leash, and was armed with a gun, the other two had their bows and lances. If I had been armed with the poorest pot-metal, muzzle-loading shot-gun that was ever manufactured at Birmingham, I would not have feared them, but as I had no weapon more formidable than the scissor blade given me by Brown, I "laid low" and watched them from my hiding place. When the Indians following the dog came to the place in the prairie from whence I had turned back on my trail, the dog lost it of course, but the Indians (taking it for granted, I suppose, that I had gone on in the same direction) urged and led the dog that way until finally they went out of sight. If I had not thrown them off my trail in the manner described, there is no doubt I would have lost my scalp on that occasion, and I took considerable credit to myself for having beaten them at their own game.

I remained but a little while in the hiding place after the Indians left. But the course I wished to travel was the one they had taken, and for that reason, and because my provisions were nearly exhausted, I determined to keep up along the edge of the timber, hoping to find some settlement and replenish my larder. I followed up the margin of the timber for several miles, and at length came to a "clearing," on the opposite side of which I saw a house. I cautiously advanced towards the house until I was satisfied it was not occupied, and that I could venture up with safety. On entering it I found that a marauding party of Mexicans had lately been there and appropriated to their own use whatever there might have been eatable on the premises. I searched the house thoroughly, but could find nothing in the way of "provender."

CHAPTER XIV.

SLEEP LUXURIOUSLY IN A BED—ROUSED UP BY HOGS—SUCCEED IN CAPTURING ONE—MURDER HIM IN COLD BLOOD WITH A MAUL—BUTCHER HIM WITH A PIECE OF DRAWING KNIFE—MAKE ANOTHER START—UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT TO STEAL A MEXICAN SOLDIER'S GUN.

By the time I had finished my fruitless search for something to eat the sun was about setting, and as there was a bed in the house, which looked very inviting to me after sleeping so long on the ground, I concluded to accept the invitation and pass the night in it. After a very frugal and unsatisfying repast upon the small remnant of ash cake and bacon in my knapsack, I turned into my bed and was soon fast asleep.

It must have been near midnight when I was aroused by some noise. I listened attentively and soon ascertained that the noise was nothing but the grunting of several hogs that had taken up their quarters under the house whilst I was asleep. The house was set upon blocks, a foot or so above the ground and the space beneath the floor was therefore sufficiently roomy for their accommodation. The floor was made of puncheons or slabs, which were held in their places solely by their weight. Hunger as well as necessity is the mother of invention, and it occurred to me that I might bag one of these porkers by quietly lifting a puncheon immediately above the spot where they were lying and then quickly grabbing the first one I could get hold of.

I therefore got up from my comfortable bed, and after listening awhile to their grunting so as to ascertain what part of the floor they were under, I slowly and noiselessly lifted a slab above them and laid it aside. Thrusting my arm down through the opening I had made, I felt around until my hand came in contact with the leg of a hog, when I suddenly seized it, and the row began. I had got hold of a hog much too large for me to manage well, and found it no easy matter to induce him to come up into my comfortable quarters. He struggled vigorously to get loose, squealing all the while in the most ear-piercing manner, and for some time I thought it very doubtful how the contest would end—whether I would succeed in hauling the hog up into the room, or the hog in dragging me under the floor. But I knew if I "let go" there would be no pork steaks for breakfast, as the other hogs had been frightened by the squealing and struggling, and had left for parts unknown. But the idea of having no steak for breakfast gave me more than my usual strength, and at last, but not until he had cut me severely with his hard hoofs and rasped a good deal of the skin off my knuckles against the sharp edges of the puncheons, I drew him by main "strength and brutality" into the room and replaced the puncheon. I had secured my hog, but how to kill and butcher him was the next question. I had nothing to do it with except one of the blades of the little pair of scissors given me by Brown, and that I knew was totally inadequate for the purpose. I could find nothing in the room that would do, so I slipped out, carefully fastening the door after me, to see if there was anything about the premises with which I could dispatch the porker. The moon was shining brightly, and I looked all around for something that would enable me to convert my hog into pork, but could find nothing better than a large maul that had been used for splitting rails, and with this I re-entered the room and made a determined assault upon the hog. The maul, however, was so heavy and unwieldy I could not handle it with sufficient celerity to inflict a stunning blow. Round and round the room we went for a quarter of an hour or more, the hog squealing all the while and his hoofs clattering and rattling on the puncheons and making altogether such a "racket" as might have been heard at the distance of half a mile. At last, however, I got a fair lick at his cranium, which brought him to the floor, where I finished him by continuous "mauling."

When the bloody deed had been committed, I was so completely exhausted that I tumbled back on the bed, was asleep in a few moments, and did not awake until the sun was high in the heavens. I got up, and the first thing I did was to drag my hog to a spring near the house, where I butchered him after a fashion, with a piece of broken drawing knife I picked up in the yard. After finishing this job I started a fire, and roasted four or five pounds of the pork for breakfast. When I had breakfasted, I packed as much of the pork as I could carry in my knapsack, and started up the bottom again, keeping close to the edge of the timber so that I might readily take shelter in the event that I should meet with a party of Mexicans or Indians. I had come to the conclusion by this time that previously I had been steering my course too low down the country, and I thought it best to keep up the river some distance before I resumed it again, in order to avoid the lagoons and swamps which I supposed abounded in the vicinity of the coast.

I traveled five or six miles without seeing anything worthy of note, and at noon stopped an hour or so at a pool of water to rest and cook some of my pork, and to "barbacue" the remainder so as to prevent it from spoiling. It was late in the evening before I started again, and about sunset, not finding another house, I concluded to encamp in a point of timbear near a pool of water.

Just after I had turned into a bed of dry grass for the night, I saw a light spring up, apparently five or six hundred yards above, on the edge of the bottom, and I concluded to get up and see what caused it. The moon had not as yet made her appearance, and I thought I could reconnoiter the locality with safety, even if the light should prove to be from the camp fire of Mexicans or Indians. Guided by the light, which continued to shine steadily, I went perhaps a quarter of a mile, when I saw that it came from the chinks of a small log cabin. I approached it silently, and when near it, I saw there were several other cabins near it, but no lights were visible in them. The chinks between the logs of the cabin in which the light was shining were all open, and I carefully crept to the side nearest me and peeped through one of them. I had heard for some time a queer kind of rasping sound proceeding from with the cabin, for which I could not account until I looked through the chink, and then I saw a Mexican soldier sitting on the floor, shelling corn into a tub, which he did by rasping the ears on the edge. He had on his shot pouch and powder horn, but his gun I noticed was leaning against the wall next to me, and as there was an opening between two of the logs it was leaning against wide enough to shove my arm through, it occurred to me that possibly I might be able to draw the gun through this opening before the Mexican was aware that any one was in the vicinity, as his back was turned towards me. So I reached in, seized the gun cautiously, near the muzzle, and began to draw it slowly through the chink between the logs. There is no doubt I would have succeeded in my attempt to get the gun, but when the barrel was fairly outside and I felt sure I had secured the prize, to my great disappointment the breech was so large that it stuck hard and fast between the logs. In my effort to pull the gun through, I unavoidably made some noise that attracted the attention of the soldier, and he turned and uttered an exclamation of fear and astonishment when he saw his gun thus mysteriously disappearing through the chink in the cabin, and he instantly sprang forward and clutched it by the breech.

The noise aroused three or four dogs sleeping near the cabin, and they began to bay me furiously. I was sure there were more Mexican soldiers in the adjoining houses, and thinking I might find a "healthier" location than the one where I was, I made off at "double quick" for the bottom, closely pursued by the dogs. When I reached the timber, I picked up a club, turned upon the dogs and drove them back. I heard a good deal of shouting and "carahooing" at the cabins, but as the night was quite dark I had no fear of being pursued, and leisurely took my way along the edge of the timber. When I had got I suppose a mile from the cabins, I went into the timber and encamped in a secure place.

My failure to get the soldier's gun was a great disappointment to me. Every house I had visited since I struck the settlements, I had searched closely for a gun, hoping that one might have been left by the occupants when they hurriedly fled before the invading army, but my search was always fruitless. People had abandoned a great deal of valuable property, but whatever arms they had they carried off. I had an abundance of ammunition, for at one of the houses I had searched I found powder and shot, which I secured, and all I lacked was a gun. I would willingly have given all the money I had in the world (amounting to seventy-five cents in specie) for the poorest pot-metal gun that was ever manufactured, and taken the chances of its bursting whenever I fired it.

CHAPTER XV.

Followed by Wolves—Mexicans and Indians—Indian Camp—Pass the Night There—Signal Smokes—Lost on the Prairie—Tres Palacios—Try my Hand at Manufacturing a Bow.

Just at daylight I was aroused from my slumbers by the clucking and gobbling of wild turkeys. I had encamped very near a large "roost," and as I made no fire I had not disturbed them. Many of the trees in the vicinity were literally filled with them, and they were so tame I could easily have killed one with a bow and arrow if I had had them, and I determined I would try my hand at manufacturing these primitive weapons, if I could find some suitable tool to work with.

After I had reconnoitered from the edge of the timber and ascertained that there were no Mexicans in sight, I went on up the bottom three or four miles, and then struck across the prairie in the direction I had been traveling. My route was through an open prairie interspersed with "mots" or groves of timber. In one of these I stopped about noon, and broiled a piece of my pork for dinner. After resting an hour or so I continued on my way, and about sunset came to some timber bordering a small stream. I had scarcely entered this timber, which was open and free from undergrowth, when I noticed several large wolves trotting along behind me. Every now and then they set up a howl, which was answered by others in the distance, and before long numbers of them had gathered around me, attracted, I suppose, by the howling of those I had first seen, or by the smell of the fresh meat I had with me. I had no fear of an immediate attack from them, nevertheless, I hurried on as fast as I could until I came to the small stream I have mentioned, on the bank of which I pitched camp, near a large fallen tree that would afford sufficient fuel to keep a fire burning all night. I am confident if I had not had a fire that night, the wolves would have torn me to pieces; as it was, they sometimes ventured up to within a few feet of the fire, howling and snarling, and evidently inclined to make a dash at me at all hazards. It was impossible to sleep, so I took my spite out of them by occasionally throwing a fire brand amongst the crowd. This would silence them for a moment, but they would soon begin their howlings again. Towards daylight they raised the siege and departed, and I got a little nap before sunrise.

To-day, while crossing another large prairie, I saw in the distance a considerable body of Mexicans or Indians, I could not tell which, who were traveling at a rapid rate, and I soon lost sight of them. In this prairie I passed many herds of deer, generally fifty to a hundred in a herd, which were so gentle they frequently permitted me to approach within a few paces of them before they noticed me at all. I also saw several droves of mustangs, which were much wilder than the deer, and invariably whenever I got within five or six hundred yards of them they would raise their heads, gaze at me for a few moments, and then with much snorting and "cavorting" they would go off like the wind, and never slacken their speed as long as they were in sight.

In a small grove of timber where I had halted to rest awhile, I saw for the first time a horned frog. I had heard of the tarantula and centipede of Texas, and supposing the harmless frog was one or the other I picked up a stick about ten feet long (not venturing to approach nearer such a poisonous reptile) and mashed him as flat as a pan-cake.

Continuing my course, about sunset I came to a belt of timber bordering another small stream. On the bank of this stream there was an Indian encampment that appeared to have been occupied a day or so previously. Several of their fires were still smoking, and from their number I supposed there were thirty or forty in the party. Around these fires was scattered a great quantity of bones, mostly those of deer, though the head of a mustang here and there showed that they varied their diet by an occasional feast on horse flesh.

A cold misting rain had begun to fall just before I came to this camp, and seeing it was likely to continue through the night, I took possession of a shanty built of small poles and covered with slips of bark. In this I stowed myself and baggage and made myself perfectly "at home." With a large fire in front of it and plenty of hog, but no hominy, I passed a very comfortable night, serenaded as usual by wolves.

Next morning the rain had ceased, and the sun was shining brightly when I woke up. Cooking a piece of my pork, I made a hasty breakfast for fear the owner of the shanty might return and ask me to pay for my night's lodging, and again started on my journey.

During the day I saw several "signal smokes," made I suppose by Indians, but they were a long way off. These signal smokes are curious things. Often when traveling over the plains of Western Texas, I have seen a column of smake rise perpendicularly into the air (no matter how strong the breeze might be blowing) to a great height, when it would spread out at the top like an umbrella, and after remaining stationary for a moment "puff" it would suddenly disappear, to be answered perhaps by another, twenty or thirty miles away. They are no doubt intended for signals to warn others of the proximity of foes, and to indicate their own position. I have asked many old frontiersman how it was the Indians made smokes, but none of them could ever explain the matter satisfactorily to me. I have occasionally seen four or five of these signal smokes rising up in various directions at the same time.

To-day, for the first time, I saw what I know now was a tarantula, a very large and exceedingly venomous spider, that haunts the dry and elevated prairies of Western Texas. They are not often seen in the timbered lands or in the immediate vicinity of settlements. The body of a full grown one is as large as a hen's egg, and is covered with scattering hairs or bristles. They have two curved fangs protruding from the mouth, about as long and very similar in appearance to those of the rattlesnake. When provoked they are very pugnacious, rising upon their hind legs and springing towards the assailant five or six inches at a time in successive leaps. The Mexicans say their bite is certain death, and one can readily credit the assertion after seeing them.

I made but little if any progress to-day, for not long after I had started it clouded up and commenced misting again, so that I lost sight of the timber towards which I was steering my course. Finally I became completely bewildered and after wandering about all day I came to a belt of timber I had good reason to suppose was the same I had started from in the morning. At any rate the sun just then showed itself for a few moments, and I found I was traveling in the direction directly opposite the one I should have pursued.

It was too late to take the prairie again, and I picked out a suitable place for camp, started a fire and cooked some of my pork for supper, which for want of salt was getting to be rather too much tainted to suit the taste of any one but a Frenchman. During the night the wolves favored me with another concert of howlings, but they were much less impudent than upon a former occasion, and did not approach near enough to enable me to salute them with fire brands.

In the morning I rose betimes, and unpacking all the pork I had left, I spitted it on sticks stuck up before a blazing fire.

I thought by roasting it in this way to keep it from spoiling entirely. The clouds had blown off and the sun shone out warm and pleasant, and having eaten some of my roasted pork which had decidedly too much of the "gout," I started out again across the open prairie. This time I made the trip without difficulty, and about mid-day I came to a small stream which I afterwards learned was called the Tres Palacios or Three Palaces. How it acquired the name I cannot say, but I am sure I saw no palaces in its vicinity. Where I crossed it, I noticed a few small cedar trees growing near the bank, and I determined to cut one of them down and make a bow. This was no small job, as you may suppose, considering I had nothing to cut it with except a small piece of the blade of a drawing knife—the same I had found at the house where I killed the hog, and which I had carried in my knapsack ever since. By the time I cut the sappling down, I was both tired and hungry, so I knocked off work to rest a while and cook some pork. I then resumed my task, and chopping off about six feet from the butt end of the sapling I split it into four pieces with a wooden wedge and maul. From these I selected the one that was freest from knots and other defects, out of which, by patience and perseverance and with the aid of my piece of drawing knife I manufactured a very good bow. Arrows I knew I could easily get anywhere in the bottoms among the thickets of swamp dog wood or young cane. By the time my bow was finished night came on, and I pitched my camp near the creek in a little open space completely surrounded by a thick growth of underwood. Here I built my fire, warmed over some of my roasted pork, and after supper "turned in" to a bed of Spanish moss which I had gathered from a tree near by.

The next morning I gave the finishing touches to my bow and then for the first time it occurred to me that I had nothing that would answer for a string. I tried to make one of the bark of several shrubs, and of the leaves of bear grass, but although I taxed my ingenuity to the utmost, I failed to make a cord strong enough for the bow, and I had at last to abandon the attempt altogether.

This was a great disappointment to me as I had calculated largely on supplying myself with an abundance of small game by means of my bow. I had heard of people having "two strings to their bows," and yet under the most pressing necessity I was unable to get one for mine—which convinces me that things are very unequally divided in this world.

The day was so far gone when I had finished my unsuccessful attempt at cord making, that I thought it best to remain where I was for the night and make a fresh start in the morning. It must have been twelve or one o'clock, when something awoke me, and finding that my fire had pretty well gone out, I was just in the act of getting up to throw some sticks on it, when I heard the stealthy but heavy tread of some large animal near by. I laid still and listened attentively, and was convinced there was some heavy animal cautiously approaching the spot where I was lying. Just then, fortunately probably for me, a chunk rolled off a log I had placed behind the fire, and blazed up brightly. By the light thus made, I saw distinctly either a large panther or Mexican lion, not twenty feet distant, crouching down as if about to spring upon me. I instantly jumped, and seizing my "bed clothes" (the dry Spanish moss I had gathered) I threw it on the fire and it blazed up at once as high as my head. This must have frightened the animal, whatever it was, for when I turned to look it was gone. Possibly it did not intend to attack me, but the way in which it had approached me, was to say the least of it very suspicious. The loss of my "bed clothes" did not discommode me much, as I sat up the balance of the night to keep my fire supplied with fresh fuel, *although the night was quite warm.*

CHAPTER XVI.

NARROW ESCAPE FROM INDIANS— REACH THE COLORADO RIVER AND SWIM IT—OLD CANEY CREEK—IMMENSE CANE BRAKE —ENCOUNTER WITH A WILD CAT—GET INTO COMFORTABLE QUARTERS.

As soon as the sun rose, I made haste to leave the locality where I had passed such an unpleasant night. Late in the evening I came to an extensive body of timber, in which I supposed I would find a considerable stream. On the edge of this timber I saw a house, and as by this time what remained of my pork was so strong of the "gout" that I don't think even a Frenchman would have relished it, I determined to go to the house and search for something to eat. I entered the woods some distance below it, and kept under cover until I was near enough to see there was no one about, when I ventured up. On entering I soon saw that it had been ransacked by the Mexicans, who had consumed or taken away whatever there might have been in it in the way of eatables. In the vicinity, however, as I was leaving, I came across a half-grown hog, which evidently had very recently been shot by some one, who had taken only a small part of it, and I appropriated as much of what was left as I could conveniently carry. As the sun was about setting, I went some distance into the timber, so that the light from my fire would not be visible to any one passing along the prairie, where I "bivouacked" for the night at the foot of a tree.

By sunrise I was up and on my way again, crossing in a mile or so a considerable creek. To-day I passed over a country mostly prairie, but interspersed here and there with groves of live oaks, hackberry, etc., which gave it a park like appearance. In one of these groves, thickly settled with underbrush, I stopped to rest, and was just in the act of leaving it, when I heard the tramping of horses' hoofs and the jangling of spurs and other accoutrements. Looking through the bushes I saw about twenty Indians slowly jogging along in single file upon their horses. They had no guns and were armed only with bows and lances. They rode within thirty paces of where I was lying—low, but did not halt, and in a few moments they were hid from my view by another grove. I remained where I was half an hour longer than I would have done otherwise, in order to give these Indians full time to get out of my way, and then proceeded on my course. A little before sunset I came to a clear running creek, on the farther side of which I encamped. (At that time, all the creeks and small water courses, and even the ponds in Western Texas were clear and pure, but now many of them have lost that character to a greater or less extent, owing to the cultivation of adjacent lands and the tramping of stock.)

I had made my camp beneath some low spreading live oaks, which appeared to be a favorite roosting place for wild turkeys. Just at dusk they came flocking into them from every direction, and they were so unused to being hunted, I could easily have killed one with a pocket pistol—but as I didn't have the pistol I had to content myself with roast pork instead of roast turkey.

I had noticed before dark that a very extensive prairie lay to the north and east, and I was up and on my way the next morning before daylight, in order that I might reach the timber on the opposite side as speedily as possible. I ran but little risk comparatively when traveling in timber, but on the open prairie I was in constant danger of being picked up by parties of Mexicans or Indians. I pushed on as fast as I could until noon, when I stopped to rest in a grove near a small lagoon that seemed to be well stocked with fish, for I saw numbers of bass and perch swimming in the shallow water near shore. On the margin of this lake I found some wild onions growing, which I dug up and ate raw, and which were a great treat to me, as I had not had anything in the vegetable line, fresh and green, for a long time.

In the evening I continued on my way across the prairie on the farther side of which I could see a long line of unbroken timber stretching from northeast to southwest, as far as my eye could reach. It was nearly night when I came to this timber, and I had gone but a little way in it, when I saw a large river before me, which I knew must be the Colorado. The river was very high and rapid, and I thought it best to encamp for the night and wait until morning before I attempted to swim it. Where I struck it, it was about two hundred yards wide and much swollen by recent heavy rains, and although I was a good swimmer, I felt some hesitation the next morning in "taking water." However, I looked around and found a suitable piece of dead timber, to which I tied my boots and clothes, and launched forth with it on the turbulent stream, pushing it before me as I swam. Finally I made a landing safely on the north bank of the river, but was carried by the strength of the current a considerable distance below the point where I had entered the water.

After resting myself a while and drying my clothes, I took up the line of march again through a heavily timbered bottom about a mile and a half wide, from which I at length emerged into the open prairie. Without halting I continued on my course until late in the evening, when I came to the timber on old Caney Creek. Along this creek, which apparently in times gone by was the bed of the Colorado river, from its head to its mouth, a distance of sixty or seventy miles, there was a continuous cane brake. Where I struck the timber on old Caney, there had been a considerable settlement, as some four or five houses were in sight, but on examination, I found that all of them had been plundered by Mexicans, who had taken everything of any value left on the premises. At one of these houses whilst searching the rooms to see if anything in the way of provisions had been overlooked by the Mexicans, I heard a hen "squawking" as if some "varmint" was in pursuit of her. I stepped to the door to look out, and saw a hen racing around the yard and a very large wild cat following her closely. Having seen nothing eatable anywhere, except this hen, I determined to put in a "bid" for her myself, and picking up a billet of wood, I stepped out boldly towards the cat. When he saw me coming, he quit his pursuit of the hen, but showed not the slightest disposition to abandon the field. I advanced to within a few paces of where he stood humping his back and showing his teeth, and threw the stick I had in my hand at his head. I missed my aim, but struck him a severe blow on the side, and instantly he gave a scream and sprang furiously towards me. I retreated precipitately and ingloriously for the house, which I reached just in time to rush into the door and slam it to in the face of the infuriated cat. If I had had a few feet further to go, he would have nabbed me to a certainty. The cat stopped some time in front of the door, as if he intended to besiege me in the house, or was bantering me to come out and give him a fair fight, which, under the circumstances, I declined doing, but after a while he went off leisurely towards the woods and I saw him no more. In the mean time "the bone of contention," the hen, had gone to roost in tree near by. She undoubtedly owed her life to me, but for a very little while, for after dark I climbed up to her roost, grabbed her by the leg, and wrung her neck. With my prize, I retreated as speedily as possible to the house, for fear the wild cat might return and assert his claim to it again, and as I had no weapon I was very sure he would get the better of the contest and the hen too.

I remained all night at this house, and after breakfasting on the hen I had *saved* from the wild cat, I started off down the bottom to reconnoitre the country in that direction. When I had gone a mile or two I came to a small prairie connected with the main one by a very narrow neck and surrounded everywhere else by thick woods and cane brakes. This I concluded to explore, and after proceeding some distance in it, I saw there was a house at the farther end. When I had approached within a hundred yards of the house, a half a dozen dogs came rushing out of it, seemingly with the intention of tearing me to pieces. I picked up a stick to defend myself, but when the dogs got near enough to see that I was an American, instead of attacking me they began to leap and jump around me as dogs do when they see their masters after a long absence. How they found out so quickly I was an American, I do not know, for exposure to sun and weather had tanned my complexion, until it was as dark as that of a Mexican or Indian. With my escort of dogs I went to the house, and entering it, saw at once that the Mexicans had never been there, for everything remained, evidently, just as it had been left by the occupants—furniture untouched, cases filled with books and articles of wearing apparel, cribs with corn and smoke house containing at least a thousand pounds of bacon. In a kind of shed room I also found a barrel of brown sugar and half a sack of coffee, and in the crib, besides corn, a quantity of potatoes and pumpkins. There were a great many chickens and ducks in the yard, which no doubt, had been protected from "varmints" by the pack of dogs that still continued to escort me about the premises. In the smoke house as I have said, there was a large quantity of bacon, and the first thing I did was to take a "middling" and cut it up for the dogs. I then built a fire in one of the chimneys and in a little while had cooked for myself a first rate dinner together with a cup of coffee, the first

I had tasted since leaving Goliad. After dinner I turned into one of the beds in the house and had a comfortable snooze.

When I awoke I got up and continued my investigations. In a back room I found quite a library, a rare thing at that time in Texas. I found also many articles of clothing in a closet, some of which fitted me tolerably well, and from which without any tear of being arrested for "petit larceny," I replenished my scanty wardrobe. Among other things I found in this house—something I wished for exceedingly—was a *gun*, but unfortunately it was without a lock, and consequently useless. Not far from the main building there was a row of log cabins, that evidently had served as negro "quarters," which induced me to believe that the place belonged to some well to do cotton planter.

As I had been much weakened by starvation and fatigue and the exposure I had undergone in my route through the wilderness, I concluded I would "stop over" a day or two at this house and recuperate my strength a little before I set out on my journey again. There were beds in several of the rooms, in one of which I slept at night, while my pack of dogs kept watch outside. These dogs were not mongrels or "curs of low degree," neither were they of the "suck egg" breed, as was evident from the fact that although they were in a starving condition when I came, and that the chickens had laid their eggs almost everywhere in the house and yard, not one had been touched by them—for which I was thankful, being particularly fond of eggs myself.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN CLOVER—TOO MUCH FRIED CHICKEN—PITCHING A TENT OVER A "DEN" OF RATTLESNAKES—FOLLOWED BY MY PACK OF DOGS AND COMPELLED TO RETURN—GIVE THEM THE DODGE IN THE NIGHT, BUT ONE TRAILS ME AND PERSISTS IN KEEPING ME COMPANY—I NAME HIM "SCOUT."

I remained several days in my comfortable quarters, feasting on the good things I found in them, and reading books I selected from the library. On the evening of the third day of my sojourn at the house, feeling a little unwell (I rather think I had been indulging somewhat too freely in "fried chicken"), I concluded I would take a short stroll around my domains by way of exercise. After going a few hundred yards I turned to take a bird's eye view of my surroundings, and I exclaimed as Crusoe did on his island:

"I am monarch of all I survey,
My right there is none to dispute,"

except, I mentally added, a marauding party of Mexicans or Indians, and now and then a wild cat.

Whilst passing through some tall grass, I came very near treading on a rattlesnake, the first I had seen in Texas, although some portions of the country I had passed over was much infested with them; but the season then was hardly far enough advanced to bring them out of the dens or holes in which they take up their winter quarters. Often since, when passing over some of the uninhabited plains between the Nueces and Rio Grande rivers, I have found them so numerous in particular localities, that I was scarcely ever out of hearing of the sound of their rattles. They are not, however, nearly so vicious in Texas as they are in some other countries, and seldom attempt to strike, unless attacked. I have slept with them, ridden and walked over them frequently, and instead of trying to bite me they always did their best to get out of the way—except on one occasion. I was stalking some deer one day on the prairie, when I stepped upon a rattlesnake lying coiled up in the grass. I knew even before I saw it, by the peculiar soft *squirmy* feel under my foot that I had put it on a snake, and I promptly "lit out" without waiting for orders. As I did not wish to shoot him for fear of alarming the deer, and as they are easily stunned by a very slight tap on the head, I drew the ramrod from my rifle and gave his head a smart blow with it. I then mashed his head by repeated blows with the breech of my gun, and thinking of course I had killed him, I went on after the deer. Two days subsequently when passing the place again, that same snake came very near biting me. I knew it was the same, for one of his eyes was out, and his whole head bruised and bloody from the blows I had given it with the breech of my rifle. I really believe he recognized me as the "author of all his ills," for when I attempted to go near him he would raise his head a foot or more from the ground, and with his rattles going incessantly, would glare at me with his one eye in the most vindictive way. I determined to make sure of him this time, and leveling my rifle at his head, I took good aim and fired. The bullet knocked his head into fragments, and one of the pieces struck me on the forehead, making a slight wound. The idea immediately occurred to me that I had been struck by one of his fangs, and that I was fated to be killed by this particular snake. However, after bathing the scratch in a pool of water, and finding that my head had not swelled up as big as a bushel, I went on my way, congratulating myself upon my second escape from my vindictive foe.

But to return from this digression, to my story. On the morning of the fourth day of my sojourn at this house, I concluded I had regained my strength sufficiently to take the road once more, or rather the woods and prairies. Preparatory to leaving, I packed up as much sugar, coffee and bacon as I could carry, together with five or six pounds of meal, which I had ground upon a steel mill. I also put a tin cup in my knapsack, and several other articles which I thought would be useful to me. When ready to start I stuck a couple of carving knives (which I had also found at this house) in my belt, and, bidding adieu to my dogs, after I had given them middlings enough to last them for a month, I set out on my travels again. But, to my great dismay, when I had got a few hundred yards from the house, I found I had not consulted the wishes of the dogs about leaving them, and that the whole pack was following close at my heels—suspecting, I suppose, from the preparations they had seen me making, that I was going "for good." I tried to drive them back by throwing sticks and other things at them, but it was all to no purpose. They would stop whenever I did, but the minute I started they followed on. I knew it would be impossible for me to travel safely through a country in which I would be liable at any time to meet marauding parties of Mexicans and Indians with a half dozen dogs at my heels, and finding I could not get rid of them, I determined to go back to the house, wait there until night, and then quietly leave them. So I returned, and passed another day very pleasantly at my house, looking over the books in my library, and cooking and eating at short intervals.

Before I retired to my apartment, I noticed particularly where the dogs were sleeping, and about midnight I got up, quietly shouldered my pack of provisions, and left the house. I had gone perhaps half a mile down the edge of the cane brake when I heard the pattering of feet behind me, and in a few moments one of the dogs came up. I beat him severely with a stick, but he only whined and crouched down at my feet. Finally, I determined to kill him with one of my butcher knives, but as I grasped him by the neck, and drew my carving knife, he looked up at me so piteously that I hadn't the heart to use it, and abandoned my murderous intention. I thought I could manage to keep one dog under control, and that the risk I ran of being killed or captured would not be increased to any great extent by having a dog with me; besides, I came to the conclusion that the company of a dog was better than none. Like the Frenchman, I think that solitude is very pleasant at times, provided there is some one with you to whom you can say "how delightful is solitude." The dog that followed me was a very large and powerful one —a cross, I think, between the English bull and the Newfoundland. I found him to be tractable and, at the same time, as courageous as a lion, In a few days I had him perfectly under control; could make him lie down at a word, and remain at camp to guard it when I went off foraging or reconnoitering. I named him Scout.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CAMP IN CANE BRAKE—TRY TO CUT A ROAD THROUGH THE BRAKE—FRIGHTENED BY A BEAR—FIND COMFORTABLR QUARTERS AGAIN—SPLENDID BREAKFAST—VAIN SEARCH FOR A ROAD CROSSING BRAKE—NARROW ESCAPE FROM A PARTY OF LANCERS—GIVE MY DOG A LESSON.

After traveling a mile or two down the brake, I thought I had gone far enough to get away from the other dogs, and I encamped for the balance of the night near a lagoon. I heard no wolves at this camp, but several times during the night I was roused by the noise made by some large animal forcing its way through the cane. I suppose it was a bear, as I noticed next morning a great many tracks in the soft ooze near the margin of the lagoon.

Whilst lying awake the next morning, upon my bed of dry leaves, my attention was drawn to a rustling among them, and turning them over, I found an ugly reptile about six inches long, which I thought then, and know now, was a centipede. Not fancying such a bed-fellow, I quickly dispatched him with a stick. They resemble somewhat the reptile called the "thousand leg worm," but they are much larger and flatter, and although they are well provided with legs, they have not quite a *thousand*. They are of a dark brown color on the back, and the under side a dirty white. Their tail is forked, and has a long sting in the end of each prong, besides smaller stings on each foot, and, to complete their means of inflicting wounds, the mouth is furnished with fangs. They are a disgusting looking "varmint," and are said to be very venomous. An old Texan speaking about them, said: "When they wound you with their feet alone, it hurts considerable; when they sting you with their forked tail it's a great deal worse, but when they pop you with all their stings, and *bite* you too —say your prayers."

As soon as I had cooked and eaten breakfast and Scout had cleaned the dishes by licking them, I began to search again for a road that would lead me across the brake. Failing to find one after searching for several hours along the edge of the brake, I determined, if possible, to cut my way through it. I therefore attacked the cane, green-briers and bushes with a carving knife, and after working faithfully till late in the day, I found I had gone about three hundred yards. Such slow progress was exceedingly discouraging, for at that rate, if the brake was as wide as I thought it to be, I would be several weeks getting through it. There were a few scattering trees among the cane, and in order that I might be able to form some idea of the width of the brake, I climbed one of the tallest, from whence I could see an ocean of cane, extending at least four miles in the direction I wished to go, and beyond the scope of vision to the Northwest and Southeast. The length of time and the amount of labor that I knew would necessarily be required to cut my way for so long a distance through this dense mass of vegetation, induced me to give over the attempt, and, descending from the tree, I took the path I had cut back to the prairie. Feeling considerably fatigued by my labors, when I got to the edge of the brake, I sat down at the root of a large tree to rest awhile. Gradually I fell into a doze, from which I was suddenly aroused by the growling of Scout, and a scuffling, scratching noise overhead, and looking up, I caught a glimpse of some huge black animal sliding down the tree a few feet above my head. I sprang off quickly to one side, and at the same instant a bear struck the ground and took his way into the cane, which popped and cracked as if a wagon was going through it. It would be hard to say which was the most frightened, I or the bear, and even Scout was so demoralized by his unexpected appearance that he made no attempt to pursue him. The bear, of course, was up the tree when I took my seat at the foot of it, and as the tree was densely covered with Spanish moss, I had not noticed him. From my protracted stay at the foot of the tree, I suppose bruin had come to the conclusion that I was laying siege to him regularly, and getting desperate, he had charged down upon me in the manner I have related. Had I known it was a bear when I first caught a glimpse of him, I should not have been alarmed, as I had never heard tell of their attacking any one except when wounded and brought to bay.

Several days afterwards, however, two of them exhibited such evident signs of hostile intentions towards me that I was induced to believe that they were not so non-combative as generally supposed.

After this little adventure, I continued on along the edge of the brake, hoping I might find some road or trail leading across it. I examined every nook and indentation, and finally came to quite a large trail leading from the open prairie towards the brake. Along this trail the old traces of wagon wheels were distinctly visible. I followed it for some distance running almost parallel with the brake, and at length came to where it abruptly turned and entered it. After crossing a strip of cane about two hundred yards wide, with a small lagoon near the center of it, spanned by a rude bridge of logs, I came to a small prairie perhaps a mile in length and half a mile wide, a considerable part of which had been in cultivation. At the farther end of this prairie I saw a house, to which the trail I was following seemed to lead. When I had approached to within three or four hundred yards of the house, I halted for a few moments to make sure whether or not there was any one about the premises. I I heard the crowing of chicken cocks and the squealing of pigs, but as I saw no smoke issuing from any of the chimneys or any other signs to indicate that the house was occupied, I ventured up. There were a great many chickens, ducks and pigs in the yard, but no dogs came to welcome us. The house was a comfortable log building, consisting of four rooms with a wide passage between them and a broad piazza in front, and was sheltered by some large live oak and pecan trees. Everything in the house remained just as it was when abandoned by the occupants, which convinced me that it never had been discovered by the Mexicans. Indeed so secluded was the locality and so completely hidden from view by the strip of tall cane on the lagoon before mentioned, that no one passing along the main prairie outside would have suspected there was a settlement in the vicinity.

This house was furnished even in better style than the one I stopped at last, which, together with the number of outhouses and negro quarters, convinced me it had been the residence of a wealthy planter. In the barns and cribs I found a large quantity of corn, potatoes, etc., and plenty of sugar and coffee in a store-room.

By the time I had made a thorough examination of the premises, the day was pretty well spent, and I determined to take up my quarters for the night in the house. Besides, it had clouded up and a cold, misting rain had begun to fall. I therefore proceeded to make myself at home without the least ceremony. I lolled upon the sofa, read the books, smoked a pipe (which the proprietor of the premises had left behind in the hurry of departure, with a box of tobacco), and after I had supped sumptuously on boiled eggs and *peach preserves,* I turned into a large double bed that looked as if it had just been spread for my special accommodation, and with Scout keeping watch at the door I slept like a prince until the sun was an hour high.

For my breakfast I had fried chicken, ash cake, boiled eggs, coffee and *honey*. After breakfast, I filled my knapsack with fresh provisions, and bidding adieu as I thought forever to these pleasant quarters, I set out again to search for a road that would lead me across the brake. Little did I think that five days would pass before I bade a final farewell to these quarters—yet such was the fact.

All that day I searched for a road that would lead me across the interminable cane brake that barred my further progress. Occasionally I would fall into a cattle or deer trail leading into it, but they either gave out entirely after penetrating it a short distance, or else split up into half a dozen blind paths that did not seem to lead anywhere or in any particular direction. Wearied and disheartened by my failure to find a road, I returned to *my* domicil, feasted again on fried chicken, eggs, honey, etc., and again took possesion of my double bed for the night.

The next day this same programme was gone through with and the next, and the next, with the same results, and I almost began to despair of ever finding a way through this apparently endless wilderness of cane, briers and brush. However, it was some consolation to me to know that after the fatigues and disappointments of the day, I had such comfortable quarters to fall back upon at night.

Nevertheless, as I was very anxious to get on as speedily as possible, I left *my* domicil one morning with the determination that I would follow the brake up to the head of old Caney, providing I could find no road crossing it. I went on up the brake, examining closely every nook and indentation without success, until I had traveled, as I suppose, five or six miles. Here I struck out into the open prairie, to avoid a deep lagoon that lay in the way, and ere long I came to a well beaten road, running almost parallel with the brake. This road had evidently been traveled a day or so previously by a large body of cavalry. I concluded I would follow it a short distance, and was going along leisurely, when I heard the clattering of horses' hoofs behind me, and turning to look, I saw a troop of Mexican lancers advancing rapidly, not more than four or five hundred yards distant. There was not a tree or bush to screen me, nearer than the brake, at least halt a mile to my right, and I knew it would be impossible for me to reach it before I was overtaken by the lancers. For a moment I gave myself up for lost, but fortunately on one side of the road there was a patch of rank dead grass, and as there was no time for consideration, I seized Scout by the neck, dragged him twenty or thirty paces into the grass, threw him down and laid myself by his side, holding him tightly by the muzzle to prevent him from growling or barking at the lancers as they passed.

In a few moments they came up and when opposite the place where Scout and I were hidden, they halted. I could see them plainly through the grass, and could hear them talking, but not with sufficient distinctness to understand what was said.

Scout, too, was aware of their proximity, and when they halted he gave a low growl, and tried to get up, but I choked him severely until he lay quiet. The lancers had evidently caught a glimpse of us before we left the road, for after they halted, several dismounted and examined the road for tracks, but luckily at that place the ground was gravelly and hard, and my boots had left no distinct traces on it.

At length, satisfied I suppose they had seen nothing, or what they had seen was only a couple of wolves or wild hogs, those that had dismounted to examine the road for "sign" sprang into their saddles, and they all rode on at a gallop. As soon as I saw they were fairly off, I drew a long breath, and I think Scout did so too, for I had choked him until his tongue lolled out. When the lancers had got to a safe distance, I loosened my grasp from his neck and let him up.

But he never forgot the lesson I gave him on that occasion, and whenever I wished him to lie down and keep quiet, I had only to place my hand on his neck, when he would crouch down and remain as still as a mouse until I told him to rise. Thankful for what under the circumstances seemed to me almost a miraculous escape, I took my way back to the timber, resolved that henceforth I would keep a better look out, and travel as little as possible in daylight, through the open prairies.

CHAPTER XIX.

BEARS AROUND THE CAMP— RETURN TO "MY" DOMICIL—MAKE MYSELF AT HOME AGAIN—LOBO WOLVES—ANOTHER START—JOINTED SNAKE—FRIGHTEN A DROVE OF MUSTANGS—DISAPPOINTED AND RETURN "HOME"—DIFFICULTY OF TRAVELING THROUGH THE PRAIRIES—MOCCASINS VERSUS SHOES—AGAIN IN SEARCH OF A ROAD—NIGHT ALARMS—IMMENSE TURKEY ROOST.

When I reached the woods the sun was about setting and as it was too far to think of returning to my "domicil," selected a suitable locality and encamped for the night. During the night several large animals which I supposed to be bear came around camp, and the noise they made in the cane, kept Scout in such constant state of excitement, that I am sure he got but little sleep.

The next morning, I retraced my way down the brake, and about midday reached my quarters, where I found everything as I had left it the day before. After feasting again on fried chicken, sweet potatoes and hot coffee, I took a seat on the porch, with a volume of Don Quixote (which I read for the first time at this house), and cocking my feet up on the bannisters, I made myself comfortable for the rest of the evening.

Whilst I was thus taking "mine ease in mine inn," it occurred to me that if Mahomet couldn't get to the mountain, perhaps the mountain might come to Mahomet—in other words, if I couldn't get to the Texan army, perhaps it would be just as well to remain where I was until the Texans whipped the Mexicans and re-occupied the country. That they would do so eventually I had not the slightest doubt, although the Mexicans had told us when prisoners at Goliad (for the purpose of discouraging us and preventing us from making any attempt to escape), that Santa Anna had defeated Gen. Houston's army, and that the whole country was virtually in their possession. But in fact I did not seriously entertain for a moment the idea of remaining any longer where I was, comfortable as were my quarters, than I could possibly help; for I knew very well I would not be satisfied with such an inactive life, when my countrymen were all in the field battling against the merciless foe. So I retired to my sleeping apartment that night with the determination of renewing my search for a road the next morning, and to persevere in it until I succeeded.

During the night I heard the howl of several "lobo" wolves very near the house, but of course I did not fear them within the walls of my castle. The fact is, I did not fear anything except a visit from marauding parties of Mexicans or Indians, against whom neither the log walls of my castle nor my two formidable looking *carving* knives would have afforded me much protection. Audubon, who is a recognized authority upon the subject of birds, if not of beasts, told me that the lobo was the largest known species of wolf in the world, and certainly they are much larger than any on the American continent. They resemble the hyena in form as much or more than they do that of the common wolf. Their howl is also very different, and when camping out alone on the prairies, it always seemed to me to be the most mournful, doleful and "lonesome" sound I ever heard. Several instances have been known since the settlement of Texas of their attacking travelers when benighted on the prairies, and I was once myself with a party of rangers who rescued a wayfarer from their clutches, and who, but for our timely arrival, would undoubtedly have been torn to pieces by them.

Nothing else occurred to disturb me during the night, and the next morning I rose betimes, and as soon as breakfast was over I shouldered my knapsack and set out, intending to make a thorough search for a road along the edge of the brake below. In the bottom to-day I noticed that many of the trees were putting forth their leaves, an indication that spring had fairly set in, and a variety of wild flowers were also beginning to make their appearance on the prairie.

To-day I came across a specimen of the jointed snake, the first I had ever seen. It was a small snake, not more than fifteen or twenty inches in length, and its skin had a vitrified or glassy appearance. It seemed to be rather sluggish and unwieldly, and when I struck it a slight tap with a small stick, to my great astonishment, it broke into half a dozen pieces, each piece hopping off in a very lively way "on its own hook." I have since heard it asserted, that after a time the broken parts of the snake will come together and reunite and then crawl off as if nothing had happened to it; but I shall always be doubtful of the story until satisfactory vouchers of its truth, duly authenticated and sworn to, are produced.

About midday I noticed a cloud of dust rising in the prairie way off to my right, caused, as I at first supposed by a large body of troops in motion. I was traveling near the edge of the cane brake, both for greater security and for fear I might pass by without observing it, some road leading across. I therefore quickly concealed myself behind a small thicket, from whence I could see all that was passing on the prairie. Presently I saw issue from the cloud of dust a dense body of horses, which, on their nearer approach, I perceived were "uncurbed by bit and riderless." I supposed there were at least six or seven hundred in the drove. I saw they would pass within a short distance of the thicket where I was concealed, and when nearly opposite, I suddenly sprang out in full view of them and gave a loud whoop. They halted at once and with heads erect, stood for an instant looking at me in astonishment, then with the precision of a troop of cavalry, they wheeled about and went back in the direction they had come.

I continued on my way, and when I supposed I had traveled at least six or seven miles from where I had started, to my great joy I came to a plain road, running from the prairie into the brake. I felt confident it would take me through it, but when I followed it a hundred yards or so into the brake, it came to an abrupt termination at a place where a large tree had been cut down and split into boards! There was not a vestige of a road beyond that point—nothing but almost solid walls of tall canes matted together with green briers and vines.

Sadly disappointed and dispirited, I retraced my steps to the prairie, and thence back towards—what I began now to regard as my permanent home, where I arrived a little after sunset, so "beat out" with my day's tramp that I turned into my bed supperless, and slept like a log until roused at daylight by the crowing of *my* chickens and the squealing of *my* pigs. It may seem strange to some, that one accustomed to walking as I was, and after living upon the "fat of the land" as I had of late, should have been so much fatigued by a little tramp of twelve or fifteen miles—but that was precisely "what was the matter with Hanna." After starving for so long a time, I had indulged too freely in "fried chicken;" and besides, walking through the woods and prairies is not like traveling on a well beaten road. In the former your progress is often necessarily slow and laborious on account of having to force your way through rank grass and many creeping vines, that are constantly entangling one's legs, and occasionally tripping one up. Moreover the soles of your shoes soon become as slick as glass by rubbing on dry leaves and grass, so that you are frequently slipping backward instead of going forward.

Being determined to persevere in my attempt to find a road that would enable me to cross the brake, the next morning I shouldered my knapsack, and set out again in the direction I had taken two days previously when I made such a narrow escape from the lancers. Scout evidently seemed to think I was wandering about in a very aimless way, nevertheless he trotted along after me without asking any questions.

I traveled up the brake a mile or so beyond the point where I had turned back on the former occasion, examining closely every nook and bend for trails or roads. In this way I discovered one or two that had escaped my observation on my previous trip, but they "petered out" after going a short distance into the cane.

Finding no road or trail to answer my purpose, and night coming on, I encamped in some timber near the edge of the cane. A little after dark I heard a great many turkeys flying up to roost in the trees around my camp. The wolves howled incessantly, and once the sharp scream of a panther close by roused Scout from his slumber and he dashed off in the direction of the sound, but very soon came running back with his tail between his legs. It was evident he wanted my "moral support," but I declined hunting panthers in the night with a carving knife. I felt no fear of them, however, in camp, as I had a blazing fire, which I took especial care to keep well supplied with fuel. I have been told that in India tigers have been known to come up to camp-fires and seize upon persons sleeping near them. This may be true, but there is no wild beast (with the exception perhaps of the grizzly bear) on the North American continent that will venture so near a blazing fire—at least I have never heard of an instance of the kind during the many years I have lived on the frontiers.

At daylight I was aroused from my slumbers by the clucking and gobbling of turkeys. There must have been several hundred of them upon the trees within fifty yards of where I was lying. One fat old fellow was sitting upon a limb not more than thirty feet from me, strutting and gobbling in the most impudent way. It seemed to me he knew I was particularly fond of roast turkey, and that he was "cutting up his didoes" for no other purpose than to tantalize me with the display of his goodly proportions. Even when I got up and walked towards him, he took no notice of me, until I threw a stick at him, when he uttered an exclamation something like "what!" and soared away to his feeding grounds.

After breakfast I continued my route along the edge of the brake. When I had gone about two miles, I noticed a house on the prairie near a small grove of timber, half a mile or so to my left, and I concluded to go out and examine the premises. The house was a small log cabin, surrounded by an enclosure containing perhaps a dozen or fifteen acres. It was poorly furnished and I saw nothing about the premises except some ducks and chickens.

CHAPTER XX.

I LAY IN A SUPPLY OF POULTRY—I ASTONISH A COUPLE OF MEXICANS—THEIR SINGULAR MOVEMENT—"COUNCIL OF WAR"—RETURN AGAIN TO MY OLD QUARTERS—FIND A ROAD ACROSS THE BRAKE AT LAST—ENCOUNTER WITH TWO BEARS.

As I did not know how long it might be before I should have a chance at "fried chicken" again, I determined to take toll out of the poultry about this house. With the assistance of Scout I soon caught and killed two fat pullets and a duck, which I tied on the outside of my knapsack. I then took a plain road running near the house and nearly parallel with the brake, and when I had gone about a mile I met with an adventure that terminated in the most singular and unaccountable manner. The road at that point was about a quarter of a mile from the brake. How it happened I did not see them sooner, I cannot imagine, unless I had fallen into what the negroes call a "fit of the mazes," but at any rate I suddenly found myself nearly opposite to two Mexican soldiers who were seated on the grass about forty paces to the left of the road. One of them was armed with a musket and the other with a lance, similar to those I had seen used by Mexican cavalry. Near them a horse, saddled, was grazing, and one of the soldiers held the end of his lariat in his hand. I have since thought the horse must have been lying down until I came near them, as otherwise I think I would have seen him sooner. As I have stated, it was a quarter of a mile at least to the nearest part of the brake, and the idea flashed across my mind that after all my narrow escapes I was certainly caught at last. Retreat to the brake I knew was impossible, as they could easily overtake me on the horse, and for a moment I stood irresolute not knowing what course to pursue. But the very hopelessness of the case produced a feeling of recklessness as to consequences, and I leisurely continued my way along the road; at the same time trying to look as unconcerned as possible and as if I didn't know (and didn't care) that a Mexican soldier was within five miles of me. All the while however, I was watching them closely. As I passed them, they made no movement except to turn their heads and gaze at me apparently in the utmost astonishment, which considering the figure I cut, just at that time, is not to be wondered at. There is not the slightest doubt that I presented a very singular and anomalous appearance. I was tanned by long exposure to sun and weather until I was nearly as dark as an Indian; my cap resembled a Turkish turban, the leather front having been long since carried away in some of its frequent encounters with green briers and other thorny shrubs; my hunting shirt was ragged and blackened with smoke, and my pantaloons, or what remained of them, were buttonless, and held up by a broad leather belt, from which a tin cup hung dangling on one side and two long carving knives on the other, and to complete this unique costume, my shoulders were surmounted by a portly knapsack, to which were tied the two pullets and the duck I had just killed. This "tout ensemble" of course accounts reasonably enough for the astonishment with which the soldiers gazed upon me as I passed, but still it does not satisfactorily explain their subsequent movements, especially as they could plainly see that with the exception of my two carving knives, I had no arms. However, they did not move until I had gone forty or fifty yards beyond them, when both suddenly rose to their feet and hastily mounted their horse, one behind the other. I of course supposed they intended to pursue me, but to my great wonder and astonishment as well as relief, they went off in the opposite direction, across the prairie, as fast as they could urge their horse on with whip and spur. The one mounted behind had a short heavy whip called a "quirt," and as far as I could see them distinctly, his quirt was incessantly and vigorously applied to the flanks of their steed, and every now and then I could see them looking back as if they expected me to pursue them.

What they took me for I am at loss to imagine, but if they had taken me for Old Nick himself I would not have quarreled with them on that score, in consideration of the expeditious manner in which they had left the field—not staying even to say "adios."

For fear, however, I might not prove to be such a terrible object to other straggling parties of Mexicans whom I might possibly meet with on this road, I left it, and did not halt until I came to the brake. There I stopped to rest a while, and hold a "council of war" with Scout, as to what was to be done next. Scout, although he expressed no opinion on the subject, I know was strongly in favor of going back to the "flesh pots of Egypt," and finally we agreed to return to our old quarters. I had noticed an old axe there in one of the outhouses on the place, and I determined to set to work regularly and cut my way with it through the brake, if it took me a month to do it. It seemed very strange to me at the time, that the settlers on old Caney did not cut roads through it when they retreated before the Mexican army. But subsequently, when I mentioned the matter to one who lived on Caney when the settlers abandoned their homes there, he told me that all living on the south side had cut roads from their houses across the brake, but that in every instance they had some circuitous way to reach them, and that no sign of a road was visible on the edge of the brake. This statement was confirmed to some extent by the fact that no one, unless closely searching for it as I was, would have suspected the existence of a road where I found one.

In pursuance of the course I had determined to follow, after resting a while, Scout and I started back to our old quarters, and about an hour before sunset I crossed the strip of cane and the bridge of logs over the bayou and entered the little prairie in which my domicil was situated. As I was proceeding leisurely towards the house, it occurred to me that it might be well to examine again the north side of the prairie bordering the main brake which heretofore I had only partially done. With this intention I left the path I was following, and when I had gone a few hundred yards I came to a trail leading towards the brake along which the marks of wagon wheels were dimly visible. This I followed until it led me into an indentation in the brake, which was so narrow and so well concealed by bushes and cane as to be barely perceptible at the distance of a few paces. Still following the traces of wagon wheels, I came on the farther side of this nook to a newly cut road wide enough for the passage of a wagon and team.

I was satisfied that at last I had found what I had been so long in search of, but in order to assure myself of the fact, I followed the road for nearly half a mile into the brake, and as it still ran on in the same direction I was convinced it would take me through. By this time the sun had set, and I concluded to return once more to my old quarters, and make an early start in the morning.

As I walked along my attention was suddenly drawn to two large black objects in the road a short distance ahead of me. I stopped a moment to ascertain what they were, and as I did so, Scout gave a low growl and retreated behind me. By the dim light that struggled through the overlapping canes I at length discovered that these black objects were two large bears, standing perfectly still in the road, and apparently waiting for us to come up. For an instant I thought of retreating, but on reflection, as I had never heard of any one being attacked by black bears unless wounded, I screwed up my courage (nearly breaking the screw-driver in the attempt) and resolved to pass them if I could. There was no chance to go around them, for the cane was so thick on both sides of the road, I might almost as well have tried to penetrate a solid wall. So I drew my longest carving knife, and boldly (apparently) advanced towards them. They stood perfectly still until I was within eight or ten feet of them, when they commenced growling, and looked so large and ferocious, and so bent on disputing my right of way, I felt more than half inclined (as Scout had done already) "to tuck my tail" and beat a hasty retreat. But I knew it was too late to turn back, and that any show of timidity would embolden them to attack if they had not intended doing so. I therefore continued to advance, and my apparent boldness seemed to daunt them a little (if they had only known how badly I was scared I am sure they would have seized me) and when almost near enough to have touched them, one of them sullenly drew off to one side of the road and one to the other, and Scout and I passed between them. As we went between them, they showed their white teeth and growled so fiercely that every instant I expected they would rush upon us, but they did not, nor did they attempt to follow us. All the while Scout kept close at my heels with his tail between his legs—the first and last time I ever saw him completely cowed.

It is asserted that the black bear never attacks a man, unless wounded or brought to bay, and I do not say positively that these two had any intention of making their supper on us, but to say the least of it, their *bearing* towards us was exceedingly suspicious; and besides, I thought they might just as well kill a fellow at once as to scare him to death. At any rate Scout and I congratulated ourselves (at least I know I did), when we were once more safe within the four walls of our house.

CHAPTER XXI.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE ROAD—SETTLE MY BOARD BILL WITH A PROMISORY NOTE—BID FAREWELL TO MY COMFORTABLE QUARTERS AND LEAVE—IMMENSE CANE BRAKE—DODGE A MEXICAN SOLDIER, AND A PARTY OF INDIANS— BEARS AROUND CAMP.

I rose early next morning to prepare as much provision for the road as I could conveniently carry. I cooked the duck and one of the pullets I had killed the day before (Scout and I had demolished the other for breakfast), and ground a gallon or so of meal on on a steel mill. Besides these, my supplies consisted of five or six pounds of bacon, several pounds of sugar, two pounds of coffee parched and ground, some salt and pepper, and *two bottles of honey*. This, I thought, with care would last us eight or ten days, even if we found nothing on the road. I also had a tin cup for making coffee, and of course my two carving knives which I had sharpened on a whetstone were as keen as razors. For these I had made scabbards out of a piece of leather and sewed them to my belt. When ready to start I scribbled with a bit of charcoa the following "due bill" upon the wall of my sleeping apartment: "—— an American captured by the Mexicans but escaped from them at Goliad, is indebted to the proprietor of this house for one week's board and lodging and some *extras*, and will pay the same on demand." The *extras* referred to consisted of articles of clothing, pipe and tobacco, etc. This note has never been presented for payment, and I suppose it is barred now by the statute of limitation—nevertheless, I would cheerfully pay the principal now—but not the *interest*, for that would put the amount far above my present assets, and I should be compelled to take the benefit of the Bankrupt Act. Having thus settled my board bill on such easy terms, I shouldered my knapsack, stuck my carving knives into my belt, and followed by Scout, I took my way towards the road I had found the evening before.

Just as I was entering the brake, I turned to take a last look at the house that had been a haven of rest to me after my wanderings in the wilderness, and I experienced a feeling of regret when I thought that in all probability I should never see it again. There I had truly been "the monarch of all I surveyed." I could loll upon the sofas—tumble up the beds—wipe the mud from my boots on the rugs and carpets—smoke tobacco (by no means of the best quality) in the drawing room—select my own "menu" from the well stored pantry and the poultry in the yard—and there was none to say me nay. Even now I look back with pleasant recollections to my sojourn in those comfortable quarters, for it was the only time I ever had complete and undisputed control of such an establishment. "Peace to its ashes" if, as is highly probable, it was subsequently burned by the Mexicans.

As I passed the place where I had encountered my doubtful friends the two bears the evening before, I noticed many of their tracks in the mud on the side of the road. They were very much like the tracks made by a *bare*-footed man (no pun intended for I detest puns), except that the heel part was as long as the toe. After traveling I suppose between three and four miles, crossing on the way a sluggish bayou, over which I "cooned it" on a fallen tree, to my great satisfaction I saw light ahead, and in a short time came to the open prairie.

At that day as I have before stated, nearly the whole of the bottoms on old Caney was covered by an unbroken canebrake sixty or seventy miles long and from three to five in width. This I had from others who were settlers in that portion of the country at an early day, and the statement is probably correct. The soil of this brake is exceedingly fertile, and the time will come no doubt, when it will be converted into one continuous sugar and cotton plantation. At the points where I saw it, it was a dense mass of cane, briers and vines, with here and there a scattering tree growing in their midst. Bears, panthers, wild hogs and other "varmints" were very numerous in it and along its borders.

About half a mile below the place where I came out into the open prairie, I saw a house near the bottom, and as I had made it a rule to search every one I passed for guns and ammunition, I started with that intention towards the one in question. I kept well under the shelter of some timber bordering the brake, to screen myself from the view of any one who might be about the premises. In this timber I struck a plain trail leading towards the house, which I took. I followed it perhaps a hundred yards or so, when as I turned a short bend in the path, I caught sight of a Mexican soldier, with his gun on his shoulder, walking rapidly towards me. Luckily a dense growth of bushes bordered the path at the point where I then was, and although I had but little hope the Mexican had not seen me, I instantly sprang into the bushes and laid down among them. Scout, who evidently had not forgotten the choking I gave him on a previous occasion, quickly followed me, and took his station by my side. It seems, however, the Mexican did notice us, for he came on, and passed within six feet of us without halting. I could almost have touched him with my longest carving knife, and if he had been a little weakly chap I think I would have been tempted to spring suddenly upon him as he passed and give him a tussle for his gun, but he was a big strapping fellow, and I knew I would have no chance of coming off winner in a hand to hand encounter with him, even if I had not been hampered with a heavy knapsack, and other "impedimenta." I concluded therefore that "discretion was the better part of valor," and did not move until he was hidden from my view by a turn of the path.

As it was evident he came from the house I had seen, and as I thought it highly probable there were "more of the same sort" there, I gave up the idea of searching it for guns, for fear I might find more of them there than was desirable; so I gave it a wide berth, and striking off through the woods to the right I came out again to the prairie two or three miles below.

The day was cloudy and dark, and I couldn't see the timber on the opposite side; consequently I could form no idea of its extent. Besides (having made a late start on account of being delayed in preparing provisions for the road), the sun was by this time getting pretty low, and I thought it best to encamp for the night and start anew in the morning.

In a little open space just within the brake, separated from the prairie by a very narrow strip of cane I pitched my camp; in other words, I pulled off my knapsack, and stretched myself upon a bed of dry grass which I had cut with a knife. It was too early to cook supper, and as I had no dread of wild beasts till dark, I did not start a fire, and very fortunate it was for me I had not done so. I was just falling into a doze, when Scout gave a low growl and at the same moment I heard the tramping of horses' hoofs. I looked through an opening in the strip of cane between me and the prairie and saw five or six Indians who were driving a number of horses, coming along the edge of the brake. Just as they were opposite to the spot where Scout and I were lying, two of the horses broke away from the "caballada," ran through the strip of cane and nearly over us. One of the Indians started after them, and was crossing the strip of cane, when the two runaways seeing Scout and I lying upon the ground, suddenly wheeled and ran back to the prairie, and the Indian turned also and followed them. If he had come six feet further he must inevitably have seen us. As it was he did not discover us, and the Indians and their drove of horses soon passed out of sight.

These two "close calls" both occurring the same day, convinced me that I had but little chance to make my way safely through a country swarming with roving bands of Mexicans and Indians; and yet, although I passed their recent encampments at several places, I never saw an Indian afterwards, nor a Mexican, except some squads of cavalry a long way off on the prairie.

During the night I heard bears crashing through the cane, and splashing in the water of the pool near which I was encamped. The number of bears at that day on old Caney was so great I cannot imagine how the settlers there managed to raise hogs unless they kept them constantly penned up. The next morning I saw many of their tracks on the edge of the pool, where they had been digging up some kind of plant with a bulbous root.

CHAPTER XXII.

PRAIRIE ON FIRE—I START A COUNTER FIRE—NARROW ESCAPE FROM DROWNING—LOSE MY KNAPSACK AND ALL MY "GRUB" BUT SAVE MY TINDER—A MIRAGE—MEXICAN CAVALRY—MEET WITH TWO SPIES FROM THE TEXAN ARMY AND RETURN WITH THEM.

The next morning as soon as I had eaten breakfast and Scout had "cleaned up" the fragments, I set off towards a long line of timber that was just barely visible on the farther side of the prairie. Not a great while after I had started I noticed a long way off to the west, a column of smoke rising up, which I supposed indicated an encampment of Mexicans or Indians in that quarter. When I had traveled perhaps three or four miles, I observed that this smoke was increasing rapidly in volume and extent, and that it appeared to be approaching the direction I was going. Then, for the first time it occurred to me that the prairie was on fire, and I began to be seriously apprehensive that the fire might overtake me before I could reach the timber. The grass of the last season's growth was from fifteen to eighteen inches in height, and as dry as tinder, and it seemed very probable, with the stiff breeze blowing at the time, that the fire would overtake me before I could gain the opposite side of the prairie, still five or six miles distant. I hurried on as fast as I could, but before I had gone two miles further, I was convinced that escape by flight was impossible. I had heard old frontiersmen say, that the only thing to be done in a case of this kind, was to "fight fire with fire." I took my flint and steel from my pocket, ignited some tinder which I wrapped in a wisp of dry grass, and swinging it quickly backwards and forwards in my hand, it was soon in a blaze. With this I set fire to the grass ahead of me, and in a few moments I had the satisfaction of seeing my counter fire sweeping the grass that grew in the direction I was going.

By this time the wall of fire extending in a long line across the prairie behind me, was swiftly moving towards me. Already I could see bright tongues of flame flashing out at intervals through the dense column of smoke, and a dull continuous roar, like the distant beating of surf on a rock bound shore, was distinctly audible. Hundreds of deer, antelope and other animals came scampering by me in the wildest terror, and numerous vultures and hawks were seen hovering over the smoke, and occasionally pouncing down upon rabbits and other small animals, roused from their lair by the advancing flames. The nearer it came the faster it seemed to come, and I could see blazing tufts of grass borne along by the wind setting fire to the prairie sometimes fifty or a hundred yards ahead of the main fire. But by the time it had reached the place where I had set my counter fire going, the grass for several hundred yards was burnt off, and of course the fire was arrested there for want of fuel. I had nothing to do but follow the track of the fire I had started, which cleared the way before me as I went, and rendered walking much less fatiguing than it otherwise would have been—verifying the truth of the old saying "that it is an ill wind that blows no good."

In about two hours after I had set my counter fire going, I came to the outskirts of the timber for which I had been steering, and through which I continued my course until I was stopped by a deep bayou. On the bank of this bayou, in a little open space not twenty feet square, I pitched my camp, and from the fallen trees around I collected fuel enough to keep my fire going all night. There I soon prepared a meal from the provisions I had in my knapsack, to which I and Scout did ample justice as we had not tasted food since early in the morning. As it was still several hours till night, I employed myself in repairing my dilapidated wardrobe with a needle and some thread I had found in *my* house on Old Caney.

Nothing occurred to disturb my slumbers during the night. The next morning after breakfast I shouldered my knapsack and started again. The bayou on which I had camped, though the current was very strong, looked so narrow I thought I could easily swim it without taking off my knapsack; so I plunged in at once, but unfortunately when I had about reached the middle of the stream, one of the straps that held it in position gave way, and in an instant the rapid current twisted it around my neck, and I went down with it like a stone to the bottom. I exerted myself to the utmost to free myself from it but without success, until I thought of my carving knives. With great difficulty I drew one of them from the scabbard (it seemed to me that everything about me was tangled up) and cut the strap that fastened the knapsack around my neck. The moment I was freed from it I rose to the surface, puffing and blowing like a porpoise, and half strangled with the water I had swallowed much against my will, for I was not in the least thirsty. Scout having no knapsack to encumber him, had already reached the opposite shore, and was running up and down the bank, whining most dolorously, and showing plainly his anxious concern for my safety. I quickly gained the shore myself after coming to the surface, but alas! I was compelled to leave my precious knapsack which contained our whole supply of provisions, at the bottom of the bayou. However, I was very glad to get out of the scrape as well as I had done.

The first thing I did after reaching the shore, was to examine the condition of my tinder, and I was glad to find that but little water had penetrated the greased cloth in which it was wrapped. I took it out and spread it in the sunshine, so that what little moisture it had imbibed might evaporate. If I had lost my tinder as well as my provisions, I would have been in a truly pitiable condition.

When I had partially dried my clothes, I set out again in my usual direction, which led me for some distance through a thick growth of underbrush, from which I finally emerged into open post oak woods. I went on through these until nearly sunset, when the howling of wolves warned me that it was time to select a suitable place to encamp. I chose a spot in a thick grove on the margin of a pond. There I started a fire, and as I had to go to bed supperless, I determined that at any rate my bed should be a good one. With one of my carving knives I cut a quantity of long dry grass, which I spread before the fire, on which I and Scout after the mishaps and fatigues of the day slept soundly till morning.

As soon as it was daylight, as I had no breakfast to cook and eat, I was on my way again, and in a little while I came to a prairie, on the farther side of which I saw a forest and a large lake near it. Towards this lake and forest I steered my course, but after traveling some distance, I was astonished to find that apparently they were as far off as when I first saw them. Whilst I was wondering at this, I noticed that the lake and forest were each moment growing more indistinct, and at length they vanished altogether, and in their place nothing was visible but the level expanse of the open prairie. I knew then that the appearance of this lake and woods was an optical illusion termed a "mirage," produced by some peculiar state of the atmosphere. I have frequently seen them since on the plains in the west, and on several occasions have been cruelly tantalized when suffering from thirst, by the sight of lakes that disappeared before I could reach them.

After traveling a while longer, I saw some distance ahead of me a grove, and still further on a forest was dimly visible.

At first I thought it probable that these also were only the ghosts of a grove and forest, and that they too would disappear and give me the slip, but they proved to be the "genuine articles." To this forest I steered my course, guided by the intervening grove. I saw several squads of Mexican cavalry on the way, but they did not come near me, and I avoided observation simply by lying down on the ground, until they had passed by. But what astonished me much was, that these squads were all traveling in a disorderly manner towards the west. It soon occurred to me, however, that the Mexican army must have met somewhere with a signal defeat, and that those I saw were straggling detachments from their routed forces. I have no doubt this supposition was correct, for the battle of San Jacinto, in which Santa Anna was taken prisoner, was fought and won by the Texans under Gen. Houston, a few days previously.

About noon, I came to the grove that had served me as a landmark to guide me on my course, and feeling somewhat fatigued, I laid down just outside of it to rest a while. I had been there but a few moments when I had practical evidence that the vast distance at which the buzzard is said to see a carcass on the ground, had not been exaggerated. When I laid down not a buzzard was in sight, although I had an unbroken view for miles in every direction, but in less than five minutes, half a dozen of them were wheeling and circling above my head, and coming lower and lower, evidently for the purpose of ascertaining if Scout and I had been killed long enough to suit their fastidious taste. "My friends," said I, "on this occasion you are a little too 'previous'—you have come very near several times having the satisfaction of picking my bones, but to prove to you that I am not as yet a fit subject for a 'post mortem' feast, I'll move on." The first movement I made satisfied them on that point, and they departed as quickly as they had come.

Continuing my course, about sun set I came to a deep and rapid stream, which I know now was the San Bernard, and I encamped for the night on the bank. By this time I was suffering much from hunger, but there was nothing in camp to eat, and I and Scout were compelled to satisfy the cravings of our appetites as well as we could, by going to sleep. The poet calls sleep "tired nature's sweet restorer," and under ordinary circumstances, no doubt there is some truth as well as poetry in the saying, but when a fellow has had nothing to eat for several days, and his bed is the naked ground, sleep as a restorer isn't a marked success—at least I was just as tired and hungry when I woke up the next morning as I was when I laid down. However, I was in hopes that I might find a settlement on the other side of the river where something to eat could be had, and without any preparation except simply tying my cap on my head securely to keep my precious tinder from getting wet, I plunged into the turbid stream closely followed by Scout. The water was very cold, but I soon crossed over and ascended the bank that rose up almost perpendicularly thirty or forty feet on that side of the stream.

When I got to the top of the bluff, I discovered a house a few hundred yards above me, to which I turned my course. As it was all open prairie on that side of the river except a few scattering groves, I had a good chance to reconoitre the premises before approaching them, and seeing nothing to indicate that the house was occupied, I went up. It proved to be a single log cabin, in rather a dilapidated condition, and had been ransacked by some plundering party of Mexicans who had taken or destroyed any provisions that might have been there, except a handful of corn I found in a barrel. As I was thoroughly chilled after swimming the river, I concluded I would build a fire in the chimney for the double purpose of drying my clothes and parching the corn I had found.

There was but one door and one window to the cabin, both on the same side, and while I was busily engaged in parching corn, my attention was drawn to a grating sound in the direction of the window, and turning to look, I saw the muzzle of a gun protruding through it. But Scout had noticed it, too, and giving a savage growl, he sprang at one bound through the window, and at the same instant almost I heard some one rip out an oath in good, King's English, and exclaiming "come take your dog off," in such choking accents as convinced me there was urgent need of haste. I ran out immediately, and with some difficulty forced Scout to let go the grip he had taken upon a thick woolen comforter, which fortunately for him, my visitor had wrapped around his neck.

After he had somewhat recovered from the surprise and alarm into which the unexpected onset of Scout had thrown him, he asked me where I was from, and how I came to be out there all alone among the Mexicans and Indians. When I had satisfied him on this point, he told me that he and a Capt. D—— were out on a spying expedition, and seeing a smoke coming out of the cabin chimney where I was carrying on my culinary operations, they had come to the conclusion that a party of Mexicans had halted there. After a consultation as to the best mode of proceeding, it was determined that Capt. D—— should remain with the horses under cover of a grove a few hundred yards from the cabin, whilst his companion, Mr. H——, should cautiously approach it on foot, and ascertain the strength of the party within. If too strong for them to contend with, he was to fire upon them through the door or window and then make his retreat as fast as possible to the grove where he had left Capt. D—— and the horses. But in arranging this programme, they did not consult Scout, who revenged himself in the manner I have stated. Afrer giving me this information and telling me that the Texans had whipped the Mexicans at San Jacinto, etc., Mr. H—— gave a whoop (the preconcerted signal for Capt. D—— to come on), and in a few moments he rode up, leading H——'s horse and another one, which to my great satisfaction I found was well packed with provisions. As I have stated, I already had a fire under way, and in a little while a pot of coffee was simmering on it, and a haversack of eatables, biscuits, potatoes, cold ham, etc., was spread upon the floor. Those biscuits! I shall never forget them! None of your little thin flimsy affairs, such as are usually seen on fashionable tables, but good solid fat fellows, each as big as a saucer, and with dark colored spots in the center, where the "shortening" had settled in the process of baking.

When the coffee was ready I was invited to "pitch in," which I did promptly and without any pressing, after casting a contemptuous look towards the little pile of parched corn on the hearth, which I had previously prepared for my breakfast.

As well as I remember, I think I was dealing with my fifth biscuit, and was looking longingly toward the sixth, when Capt. D—— mildly suggested that in his opinion I had better "knock off" for a while for fear of consequences. To this I made no reply except to seize the sixth biscuit, and while I was disposing of that, Capt. D—— expeditiously cleared the board, and deposited the remainder of the provisions in the haversack. We then mounted the horses (the pack animal having been turned over to me) and in a day or so we reached the Brazos, where a portion of the Texan army was encamped.

I have nothing further to add, except that when I left for the "States" a month or so subsequently, finding it impossible, owing to the crowded condition of the schooner in which

I sailed to take Scout with me, I gave him to my friend H——, who promised me he should be well taken care of. Many years afterwards I met with H—— at Austin, and he told me that Scout lived to a good old age, and died the respected progenitor of a breed of dogs that were highly prized for their valuable qualities.

[THE END.]

THE YOUNG EXPLORERS;

Or, Continuation of the Adventures of Jack Dobell.

CHAPTER I.

Leave for Texas again—In the clutches of a pretty girl and a "fair, fat and forty" widow—Arrive at New Orleans—Gale on the Gulf—Arrive at Galveston—Description of the city—Leave for Houston—Description of the city—Arkansas jake—Find an old schoolmate—Agree to go west with him.

After my return to Kentucky, I soon grew tired of civilized life and left again for Texas. At Louisville, I took passage on the steamboat Abeona for New Orleans. At that time the Abeona was one of the "crack boats" on the river, though she would hardly rank now as a respectable scow. She was crowded with passengers, mostly merchants returning to New Orleans from the northern cities. All went well until the second day of the voyage, when the Abeona struck a snag, which knocked a hole in her bottom as big as a barrel.

When the accident occurred, we were near the middle of the river, and the pilot at once turned the bow of the boat towards the shore. I knew very well, from the violence of the collision, that a hole had been made in the bottom of the boat, and that in all probability she would fill and sink before she could reach the bank, I therefore took my station upon the guards, with the intention of jumping overboard as soon as I saw she was going down. I had not the least idea of being drowned, as I was a good swimmer; and as all on board were strangers to me, I was not particularly interested about the safety of anybody except "No. 1."

Such a scene of uproar and confusion I never before witnessed! Women and children running here and there promiscuously, screaming, crying and praying for some one to save them; and the men (many of them worse scared than the women) were rushing hither and thither, some dragging trunks after them, others lugging their valuables of different kinds, and all seemingly for no purpose except to carry them from one part of the boat to another. I had often wondered how it was that so many people were drowned by the sinking of boats, even when they were very near or touching the shore, but the mystery was now explained. A great many people, in imminent danger, lose their presence of mind and are unable to decide upon the proper course to be taken. This is a mental defect, and does not indicate a lack of courage, for I have known men who would face dangers boldly, show this irresolution and want of presence of mind in emergencies requiring prompt action, where there was no question of personal safety. When a steamer, for instance, is about sinking, people huddle together in crowds, those who could and would save themselves being drowned by those who from excitement or fright are unable to save themselves.

Whilst I was looking on in astonishment at this scene of confusion, two women rushed up to where I was standing, and grabbing me by my arms, begged me to save them. One was a big stout woman, forty or forty-five years old, dressed in black, and, as I learned afterwards, was a widow in mourning for her third, but the other was a very pretty young girl. I don't know, but I am inclined to think, if they had both been "fat and forty" that I would have tried to break away from them by "main strength and brutality," but as it was, I thought it rather pleasant than otherwise to have the pretty girl clinging so tightly to my arm, though I knew it was highly probable when the boat went down, that we would all go lovingly to the bottom together. So I stood still and endeavored to quiet their fears by telling them there was no danger, that the boat would soon reach the shore, etc.; but I overdid the thing entirely, for I succeeded in satisfying the pretty young girl there was no danger, and she *let go* my arm, whilst the triple widow, in spite of all I could say, mended her grip, and continued to dance frantically around me, even after it was evident that all danger was over. I had given myself up for lost and booked for a place in "Davy Jones' locker," when luckily the boat ran upon a sand bar and stuck hard and fast—the water coming to within a few inches of the cabin floor. Finally the three-ply widow loosened her grip upon my arm, and, feeling very grateful to "bars" in general for my lucky escape, I went to the one inside the boat and took "a lemonade with the privilege"—in other words, three fingers of old Bourbon with a very *small* slice of lemon in it. We remained on the sand bar until next morning, when the passengers on board the water-logged Abeona were transferred to another steamer going south.

On my arrival in New Orleans, I was just in time to secure a passage on board of a schooner bound for Galveston, called the Twin Sisters, the Two Pollies, or the Three Brothers, I don't remember now exactly which, though I know the name was intended as a compliment to two or more of the same family—a very admirable arrangement it seems to me, when there are more members in a family than schooners.

Among the passengers on board, there was a wild, reckless fellow by the name of Gildart, who took great pleasure in doing things he knew would be considered "uncanny" by the superstitious sailors. One of their superstitions is, that the wind can be made to blow by whistling for it; but sailors themselves don't often attempt to "raise the wind" in this way for fear of overdoing the thing and raising a cyclone. Another superstition among them is, that if you stick a knife in the main mast a hurricane will be sure to follow in the course of a few hours.

One evening when the wind was light and baffling, Gildart came on deck, and after whistling long for a breeze, he stepped up to the main mast and stuck his knife in it. "Dom my bloody eyes," said one of three or four old tars who were watching his proceedings, "you'll have more wind than you want before morning, my hearty, if you don't you can stop my grog." By a singular coincidence, an hour or so afterwards it clouded up, and began to blow great guns, and by sunset we were scudding under bare poles before the most furious gale I have ever encountered in the Gulf of Mexico. For nearly twenty-four hours the gale continued without intermission, and everything that was not securely fastened was washed from the decks by the seas that occasionally broke over the vessel. Everybody on board was more or less sea sick, not even excepting the captain and sailors. As for myself I was too sick to be frightened by the howling of the wind, the rush of the waters and the violent rolling and tossing of the vessel, and I laid in my berth the whole time, caring but little whether the schooner kept afloat or went to the bottom. Sometimes one side was uppermost and then the other—sometimes my head was elevated at an angle of 45 degrees and then my position was reversed and my feet were turned to the zenith, and although I had cast up my accounts to a fraction at the commencement of the row, I stil continued "retching" for my boots—in fact, I was truly a "wretched" being. (No pun intended.) If Lord George Gordon Noel Byron had been in that berth with me I would have forgotten all about Childe Harold, Don Juan and Giaour, and only remembered those nonsensical lines of his,

"Oh! who can tell, not thou vain slave of wantonness and
ease,
Whom slumbers soothe not, pleasures cannot please,
The exulting sense, the pulse's maddening play,
That thrills the wanderer of the trackless way."

And taking advantage of a favorable lurch of the vessel when he was at bottom and I on top, I would have choked Lord George, etc., till he was black in the face.

When the storm abated and the waters had calmed down, I felt as if I was a cross between a stewed witch and a wilted cabbage leaf, and Gildart, the author of all our ills (at least the sailors said so), was in no better plight. He may laugh at the superstitions of sailors, but I am pretty sure he will never stick his knife into the main mast again.

In a day or so after this bout with old Neptune, we reached the city of Galveston. The city at that time consisted mainly of a wharf, two or three hundred box houses or shanties, and the hulk of a river steamboat stranded on the beach during a gale, and utilized as a "hotel." After landing I was fortunate enough to secure a berth (No. 20) at the hotel, on the lower side. I say fortunate, because the hotel lay careened at an angle of about 25 degrees, and the occupants of the berths on the upper side were compelled to "chock their wheels" to keep from rolling out, which was not conducive to quiet slumbers.

After I had seen all the "lions" of Galveston (and it didn't take me long), I inquired of the captain (I mean the landlord) when he thought of leaving for Houston. He said he had no idea of leaving for that place before next fall, when he was in hopes another equinoctial gale would set his hotel afloat, but as there seemed to me a good deal of uncertainty about that, I paid my passage (I mean my bill) and went aboard of a small steamer bound for Houston, where I landed in due course of time.

The city of Houston at the time of my arrival there, contained perhaps a hundred log and frame houses, and some forty or fifty canvas shanties—the latter occupied principally by gamblers and vendors of villainous compounds under the names of whisky, brandy, etc. Congress was in session when I arrived, and a great crowd from all parts of the country had collected there. The accommodations for travelers were upon a very limited scale, and many were compelled to "bivouac" in the open air under the shelter of neighboring trees. I was fortunate enough, however, shortly after my arrival, to meet an old acquaintance who was living in the city, who "knew the ropes," and by his assistance I secured a cot in the principal hotel, and a chance now and then at a table pretty liberally supplied with beef and corn bread. I hired a negro boy to carry my trunk to the hotel, and after seeing it safely deposited in the office, I concluded I would take a stroll around the city and have a look at the lions. All the money I had (about five hundred dollars in Louisiana bank bills) was in my trunk, and as I wished to purchase some little articles in town, I unlocked it to get a ten dollar note. After I had taken the bill from a roll I kept in a large pocket book, together with a number of miscellaneous papers, I put it back in the wallet and was in the act of relocking my trunk when I accidentally happened to look through an open door into an adjoining room, and discovered a man watching my proceedings apparently with great interest. The moment he saw that I noticed him, he turned away quickly and left the room. I was young and inexperienced and unsuspicious of every one; nevertheless, the idea struck me that as I "was a stranger in a strange land" it would perhaps be prudent to put my money in my pocket and take it with me. I therefore took the roll of bills from the wallet, thrust it in my waistcoat pocket, locked the trunk and walked off to the city—the hotel being a little way outside the corporate limits.

At that day there was truly a hard set congregated in Houston. It seemed to me that the sole business of most of them was drinking liquor and playing cards, varied now and then by a little recreation in the way of "target shooting" at each other with their double barrel guns and derringers. I was walking leisurely along Main street, when I heard the reports of two or three pistols in rapid succession, and shortly afterwards I noticed a small crowd collected in front of a shanty, over the door of which was a board with the following legend inscribed on one side: "The First Chance," and on the other "The Last Chance," thus appropriately soliciting the custom of thirsty wayfarers, coming into or going out of town.

I stepped up to one of the crowd collected around this "juicery" and enquired if anything unusual had happened. "No," said he, "nothing more'n common. Bob Sprowls and Arkansaw Jake had a little misunderstanding 'bout a game of poker just now, and Jake 'upped him' with a derringer, that's all." "And where is Sprowls now?" said I. "Well, some of his friends carried him off to the drug store to see if the doctor could do anything for him, but I reckon he can't do much for a fellow that's got a half ounce bullet through his lights." "And where is Arkansaw Jake now?" I asked. "Have they arrested him?" "Arrested thunderation!" replied my informant, "you must be green from the States—he's in there," pointing to the door of the juicery. "Seth Blake has taken Spowls' hand, and they are finishing the game—and by the by, my young man," he continued, "you'd better git out of the range of that door, for I hearn Arkansaw Jake jess now tell Seth he was renigging, and I reckon 'twont be long afore another derringer goes off."

I got out of the range of that door promptly and returned to my hotel, satisfied that the "lions" of Houston were an unique species, and withal very dangerous animals to tamper with.

I had purchased some little articles in town, and going into the office to deposit them in my trunk, I discovered that it was missing. I immediately hunted up the landlord and informed him of the disappearance of the trunk. He said he could not imagine how it was possible for any one to have carried it off unobserved, as he had seen the trunk himself in the office only a few moments before I came back. Nevertheless, it was gone. Every place about the premises was closely searched, but it could not be found, so I gave it up for a "lost ball;" still I could not but congratulate myself upon my precaution in taking my money out of it before it was stolen.

The landlord seemed to take the loss of the trunk very much to heart, and he made every effort to trace it up. His perseverance was at length rewarded with success, for a man he had employed to search a strip of woods near the house, found it and brought it back. The lock had been broken off, but on examination I ascertained that none of the contents had been taken (although among them there was a fine pair of derringer pistols and other things of value), except the portly looking pocket book, in which I had kept my roll of bank notes and a number of papers "of no value to any one except the owner," and precious little to him. After breaking the lock, it was evident the thief had hastily seized the pocket book which was lying on top of the other contents, and thinking that no doubt he had secured the prize, made off at once without stopping for further examination. This circumstance convinced me that the thief was the veritable individual I had seen watching my movements at the hotel.

I can well imagine what his disappointment must have been when he ascertained that in place of bank bills the corpulent pocket book was filled with only worthless papers, among which I remember were some lugubrious verses to my sweetheart, Jenny B., instructions for training pointers and setters, etc., together with various cherished mementos in the shape of locks of hair, "faded flowers," etc. I could imagine that thief singing, "'Tis but a little faded flower" as he sadly rummaged the contents of the portly pocket book. I was very much grieved, it is true, at the loss of these dear "relics"; nevertheless, I was somewhat consoled by the reflection that all of my "available funds" had not disappeared along with them. Such was my first introduction to the city of Houston.

In the evening I walked out to see if I could find an old school-mate of mine, who, I supposed, was somewhere in the city, as he had informed me in a letter written about six weeks previously, that he had been appointed to a clerkship in the House of Representatives. I went to all the boarding houses in the place but could get no clue of his whereabouts. At length I thought of applying to the members of the House and was informed by one of them that my friend, Mr. Pitt, was lying very ill at the house of an acquaintance of his who lived about a mile out of town. I immediately hurried off to the only livery stable in the place and asked the keeper if he could furnish me with a saddle horse for an hour or two. He looked at me dubiously for a moment, and then asked me if I could "stick a horse pretty well." Yes, said I, rather faintly, for I had not forgotten my former attempt at backing a mustang, "I believe I am a pretty fair rider." "All right," said he, "then I can accommodate you," and going into a shanty he called a livery stable, he soon returned dragging at the end of a rope a white-eyed vicious looking mustang, with a decided Roman nose, and with his shoulders and hips covered with Egyptian hieroglyphics. I didn't like the appearance of the brute at all, but I was determined to ride him at all hazards rather than admit I was "a-young-man-afraid-of-his-horses." I, therefore, walked up to him with the intention of mounting him, but on my near approach he plunged and "cavorted" at such a rate there was but little chance for anything less active than a monkey to get into the saddle. "Hold on a bit" said the man, "until I slip the blind over his eyes." "Blind," said I, "what is that?" "Why, you see, Cap.," said he (I was promoted to a Colonelcy in a short time), as he slipped a broad band attached to the bridle over the mustang's eyes, "you see, Cap., these Texas mustangs come from the ginerwine Arab stock, and among other good pints they has they won't let a stranger git on 'em tell they are blindfolded, which saves many a one on 'em from bein' carried off bertwixt two days."

The moment the blind was drawn over the mustang's eyes he stood as still as a statue; I stepped up, seized the bridle and put my foot in the stirrup, but I suppose I showed some hesitation about mounting, for the man said encouragingly, "Oh! you needn't be affeard of him for Sol Larkins gin him a round this mornin' and I know from the look of his flanks that he's tuck most of the 'pitch' out'n him for to-day—Sol's a hard rider, he is." I screwed up my nerves to their utmost tension, clinched my teeth and sprang into the saddle. The man let go the bridle at the same time, but the mustang didn't budge an inch. "What's to be done now," said I, "this horse can't travel blind-folded?" "In course he can't," said the man, "raise up the blind." I reached forward and drew up the band from the mustang's eyes, fully expecting to find myself the next moment turning a somersault over his head, but he went off as slowly and gently as a broken down tacky—which in fact he was. "Crackey!" exclaimed the man in affected astonishment as I rode off at a funeral gait, "Sol has tuck the pitch out'n that mustang and no mistake," and I soon found he had taken everything else out of him in the way of get up, for it was only by the persistent use of whip and heels that I was able reach my destination in the course of time.

Dismounting at the gate I hitched my noble Arab to a post and went in. The proprietor of the house met me at the door, and when I told him I was an old acquaintance of Mr. Pitt, and would like to see him, he led me at once to his room. As I had been informed, I found him very ill, indeed, with a violent attack of bilious fever. He was dilirious and did not recognize me. I told the landlord that as Mr. Pitt was an old school-mate of mine I would take it as a great favor if he would permit me to remain with him until the crisis of the disease had passed. To this he readily assented, and I hired a man to take my "tartar of the Ukraine breed" back to the stable, and a note to my landlord requesting him to send out my trunk and other traps.

For several days my friend Pitt lay at the point of death, but at length a favorable change took place and he rapidly recovered. As soon as he thought his strength was sufficiently restored to enable him to travel on horseback (the only way at that time of getting from one place to another in Texas), he proposed to me that I should accompany him on a visit he had promised to pay a relative of his who lived in a frontier settlement about the head of the Lavaca river. I told him my object in coming to Texas was to see the country, and that I would be glad to go with him. So the matter was promptly settled and we set about making preparations for the trip. The next morning I went into town to purchase a horse, saddle and bridle, and some articles I would need on the road. Luckily I met with an acquaintance from Velasco who had an excellent horse he wished to dispose of, as he intended returning home by water. This horse was not a "noble Arab" but a full blooded American, well broke, gentle and fleet, just such a one as I wanted. I purchased also a Mexican poncho or blanket, a saddle and bridle, a pair of spurs, a staking rope, a cabressa made of horse hair, two quart cups and some sugar, coffee, bacon, etc., for I knew that houses were "few and far between" in the country we would travel through, and that we would have to camp out almost every night until we reached the settlement where Mr. Pitt's relative lived.

When I had made my purchases I tied them all to my saddle, and mounting my steed returned home to make what further preparations might be needed for our journey. I had brought a good rifle and a large pair of derringer pistols with me from Kentucky, so that I was saved the trouble of hunting up arms, without which at that day no one ever ventured outside of the towns and villages. My friend had a splendid half breed horse which he had broken and trained himself, and a good rifle and pistols, so that the next morning we had nothing to do but to mount our steeds and set off on our perilous trip through the woods and prairies. I say perilous, because at that time the Indians frequently raided the country through which we would have to pass, stealing all the horses they could find, and murdering every one who was so unfortunate as to fall in their way.

But the possibility of losing our scalps made but little impression on Mr. Pitt and myself and we jogged along through the woods and over the green prairies in high spirits, thinking only of the glorious sport we would have hunting and fishing when we reached our destination on the Lavaca.

My friend was still quite weak from the effects of the severe spell of fever he had had at Houston, and the first day we traveled only about twenty miles, and stopped two or three hours before sunset at a fine pool of water near the edge of a beautiful grove of elms and hackberries. Beneath one of these I made a pallet for Mr. Pitt on the green grass, and after I had unsaddled and "staked" out the horses I took my rifle and started towards a herd of deer I saw in the prairie, to get some venison for supper. I soon found that there would be but little trouble to do that, for the deer were as tame as goats. I singled out a fat doe and taking deliberate aim just behind its fore shoulder I fired, and it fell dead in its tracks. So unused were these deer to being hunted that in place of running away at the report of the gun they gathered about the one I had shot down, seemingly curious to find out what was the matter with it, and I am sure I could have killed several others if I had wished to do so; but one was more than enough, and I only took the saddle and a ham from that, with which I returned to camp. We started a fire, stuck our venison up before it on spits, and soon had a supper prepared, for which our ride had given us "famous appetites." After supper we took a whiff from our pipes and then when we had restaked our horses on fresh grass we wrapped our ponchos around us, laid down on the soft grass, and slept soundly till morning.

It required but little time to get breakfast, as our venison was already cooked, and there was nothing to do but boil the coffee. After breakfast we brought up the horses, saddled them, and were soon on the way again. In a little while we came to the Brazos river, which we crossed at a ferry lately established, and then struck off in a southwest direction across the wide expanse of prairie between the Brazos and San Bernard rivers. The weather was pleasant, and the gently rolling prairie covered with green luxuriant grass and decked with a variety of wild flowers spread out before us as far as the sight could extend.

On every side we could see numerous herds of deer (sometimes as many as fifty or even a hundred in a drove), that were so tame they scarcely raised their heads to gaze at us, although the dim trail we were traveling would often take us within a few paces of them. Now and then we saw a herd of antelopes, but they were much more timid than the deer, and rarely permitted us to come within rifle range.

CHAPTER II.

Stop at an "unhealthy" locality—A party of Comanches pay us a visit—Gen. Houston's dispatch—Deceive our "buenos amigos"—The Indian spy—Cayote ranche—The proprietor gives us a "pressing" invitation to stop—Tells us how he captured a green one from "the States" and marched him up to Cayote, etc.

About noon we came to a small stream bordered by a strip of post oak woods where Mr. Pitt proposed we should stop for a while, and make a cup of coffee. I objected to making a halt there because I had been informed the locality was a noted camping place of the Indians, but Mr. Pitt insisted on stopping, saying he was too weak to travel further without resting a while.

We therefore dismounted under a shady tree, and after spreading a poncho on the grass for my friend, I slipped the bridles off the horses and staked them near by, leaving the saddles upon them. I then started a fire and made some coffee, and with cold venison and hard-tack we dined very satisfactorily. After dinner Mr. Pitt laid down upon his poncho again, and in a few moments he went to sleep. I laid down also on my blanket, but I determined to keep awake, for I knew we were in a dangerous locality, and that it would be prudent for one of us to be on the lookout. I therefore seated myself at the foot of a tree and watched everything I saw moving on the prairie.

There is nothing that disposes one for sleep so much as the idea that it is absolutely essential we should keep awake. My eyelids were getting to be very heavy, and I was beginning to lose consciousness in the stupor that was fast creeping over me, when I chanced to look back somewhat to the left of the direction we had come, and saw some objects several miles distant on the prairie. I was wide awake in a moment, and watching them closely, soon perceived that they were men on horseback, apparently traveling rapidly towards us. I roused up Mr. Pitt at once, telling him I thought a party of Indians were coming to attack us, and then ran to our horses and brought them up quickly. Slipping the bits into their mouths, we mounted them, and with our guns in our hands quietly waited until the horsemen should approach near enough to enable us to ascertain whether they were white men or Indians.

When they had come within half a mile or so of us, we could plainly see they were Indians by their dress (or rather their want of it) and the long lances they carried. "Well," said I, "Mr. Pitt, there is no doubt now that they are Indians, and it is time we should determine what we are going to do. Shall we run or fight? We can easily distance their ponies on our horses with the start we shall have, and if you say so we'll be off." "I am too weak," Mr. Pitt replied, "to run my horse. I could not possibly hold out for a long chase." "Then," said I, "we must fight," although I candidly confess I should have preferred "changing my base," for by this time I had counted the Indians and there were just fifteen of them—which certainly was very great odds for two to contend against.

When they had come within five or six hundred yards, they halted for a moment, and then suddenly dashed towards us at full speed, whooping and yelling like devils incarnate. I suppose they thought to frighten us so badly by this maneuver that we would endeavor to escape by running, and, to tell the plain truth, they partially succeeded, for although I did not run, and was not scared exactly "into a cocked hat," I was into one I think would not have been considered greatly out of fashion when cocked hats were worn—but my friend, Mr. Pitt, was as cool as a cucumber.

When the Indians had approached to within seventy or eighty yards of where we were, we leveled our rifles upon them and made signs to them to stop. They took the hint and drew up at once. A more cut-throat looking set of scoundrels I had never seen before in my life. They had nothing on in the way of clothing except a cloth tied around their waists and their quivers slung across their shoulders, and their almost naked bodies were painted in the most hideous and grotesque styles. I noticed one fellow, in particular, who had a black ring around one eye and a white one around the other, which gave him somewhat the appearance of a gigantic owl, the resemblance being augmented by a number of feathers with which he had adorned his head. Another was painted in imitation of a skeleton (he must have been a funny fellow), with alternate white and black stripes across his breast to represent ribs. Another had adorned himself with variegated splotches of red, white and black paint, and a pair of buffalo horns were fastened upon his head by means of a bright metallic band that encircled it. All were armed with bows and lances except two who had old fashioned single barrel flint and steel shot guns.

Mr. Pitt and I sat upon our horses trying to look as unconcerned as possible, but as for myself I rather think that if the Indians had been a little nearer, they would easily have discovered there was not much danger of my hitting any one unless I shot with the "double wabble."

But when they drew up in the manner I have before stated, one who seemed to be in command of the party, rode out a little way in front of the others, and spoke to us in Spanish. "Buenos dios, amigos," said he. I returned his salutation in the same language, and he then asked me who we were and where we were going. I told him we were Texans traveling from Houston to the city of Goliad. "Are you traveling alone?" said he. Thinking a little prevarication would be excusable under the circumstances, I told him that a party of ten Americans were on the road behind us, and that we had stopped there to wait for them to come up.

Whilst the chief and I were holding this confab, I noticed that the other Indians were slowly moving towards us, and I told the chief to order them to halt or we would fire upon them. He turned to them and said something in Indian, which of course I didn't understand, and they halted at once. I saw that my impromptu fib had produced the desired effect, for the chief then rode up to us alone, and holding out his hand, said, "Americanos buenos amigos." (Americans good friends.) "Yes," said I, very well satisfied with the turn affairs had taken, and shaking the proffered hand of the chief, "Americanos buenos amigos."

"What are you going to Goliad for?" said the chief.

"We are carrying dispatches," I replied, "from Gen'l Sam Houston to the Alcalde," and I put my hand in my pocket and drew out my credentials in the shape of an old receipt I had of my current expenses at the City Hotel in New Orleans, which I presented to the chief. The dispatch was as follows:

"Mr. Dobell,

To City Hotel, *Dr.*

For 7 days board @ $2.50	$17.50.
" 32 juleps at bar	3.20.
" 4 doz. Havanas	9.60.
" 20 "White Lions," at bar	4.00.
" Dinner for friend	1.00.
" Washing and extras	3.00.
Total	$40.30.

Received payment.

George Finlay."

The chief turned the document up side down, and examined it closely; particularly the bar items of 32 juleps and 20 "white lions," but his suspicions of the authenticity of the dispatch were not aroused, and he handed it back to me with a grunt of admiration, and repeated over and over, "Gen'l Houston big chief, good flen Comanche." He then asked me to give him some powder, and in my anxiety to keep on friendly terms with him and his cut throat set, I hurriedly poured two or three loads from my powder horn into Gen'l Houston's dispatch, and wrapping it up tightly, handed it to him. I do not think he noticed my cavalier treatment of the General's official document, as otherwise he might have had some suspicions of its authenticity. He then asked me for some tobacco, and taking a plug from my pocket, I cut off a portion and gave it to him. After he had again shaken hands both with Mr. Pitt and myself, and repeating over his phrase of "Americanos buenos amigos," he wheeled his horse and rode back to his men. I was much afraid our "hollow truce" would not result in a lasting peace, but after "palavering" a few moments with his men, the chief went off at a gallop across the prairie, and his men followed him, brandishing their lances and yelling like a pack of wolves.

Mr. Pitt and I remained stationary as long as the Indians were in sight (waiting patiently for the party of ten Americans to come up), but as soon as they were hid from view by a strip of timber through which they passed, our patience was exhausted and we determined to wait no longer. We put spurs to our horses and never drew rein until we had gone at least a dozen miles. By this time the sun was pretty low, and leaving the trail at dusk, we went off about half a mile to the left and encamped in a little nook surrounded everywhere except a narrow entrance, by dense chapparal. Within this nook we staked our horses, after eating a cold snack for supper (for we did not venture to make a fire for fear the Indians might have discovered the ruse we had played upon them, and followed us), we laid down upon our blankets and slept soundly till morning. We subsequently heard that a party of four men (I believe Mexicans) were killed and scalped a day or so after we had passed, at the very place where our "buenos amigos" had paid us a visit. I have no doubt at all that our "good friends" were "in at the death," and that they intended serving us in the same way had not the little "bluff game" we played upon them prevented them from doing so.

The next morning we were up by daylight, and after a hasty breakfast, we mounted our horses and took the way back to our trail, as we were anxious to leave as soon as possible, for fear our very "good friends" might pursue us. Nothing of interest occurred on the road that day, and about an hour before sunset we pitched camp near a deep water hole in the prairie, around which a few live oak trees were growing.

This water hole was evidently fed by subterranean springs, for it was very deep and the water was so clear that I could plainly see fish swimming in it, to the depth of six or eight feet. The fish looked very enticing, and I thought some of them would make a good addition to our supper, but how to catch them was the question, as we had neither hook, line, pole nor bait. But I had not forgotten a lesson I had been taught by an old frontiersman. I pulled out half a dozen long hairs from the tail of my horse, which I tied together and made a very good line for small fish. I then took a pin which I found sticking in the collar of my vest, and bent it into the requisite shape for a hook with my teeth (a feat I could not possibly perform now), and fastening it to one end of my line, and the other to a tall, dead weed I found on the bank, my tackle was complete. In the meantime, Mr. Pitt had captured, with his broad brim hat, some fat grasshoppers, and with these for bait, in less than fifteen minutes

I had a dozen fine perch fluttering on the bank. These were wrapped, still "alive and kicking," in pieces of dampened paper, and covering them with hot ashes, we roasted them like potatoes—an excellent way of cooking fish.

To the west of the water hole there was quite an elevation in the prairie, near the top of which there grew a narrow fringe of chapparal. After supper, whilst Mr. Pitt and I were reclining upon our ponchos, smoking our pipes and talking over the occurrences of the day, I happened to look in the direction of this fringe of chapparal on top of the hill, and thought I saw some dark object moving slowly behind it. I said nothing about it to Mr. Pitt, but continued to watch it closely. In a few moments I plainly perceived an Indian's head cautiously rise up above the fringe of bushes. "Mr. Pitt," said I, "cast your eyes in the direction of those bushes on the hill, and tell me what you see." "Why," said Mr. Pitt in an excited tone, "I see an Indian's head peeping above them, and the rascal no doubt is spying out our camp. Let's go and bring up the horses at once." "No," said I, "keep still and don't let him suspect we have seen him. As soon as he has made his reconnoisance of our camp and marks the place where our horses are staked, he will return to his comrades, wherever they are, and make his report, and they will certainly attack us if we should remain here for the night. My opinion is, it will be best to stay here until it is dark enough to conceal our movements, and then we will saddle our horses and leave for some healthier locality."

To this Mr. Pitt agreed, saying the course I advised was the best to pursue; but that he didn't like being driven away from our comfortable camp. "Neither do I," said I, "but on the whole, I believe I prefer a little discomfort to running a risk of having my hair lifted by those marauding rascals." And so it was determined that we would leave as soon as it was dark.

But in order to deceive the fellow who was watching us from the top of a hill, and to convince him we had encamped for the night, I got up leisurely, threw more sticks on the fire, and then went out and restaked our horses on fresh grass. The ruse evidently had the desired effect, for in a few moments I observed the spy cautiously creeping off behind the bushes, no doubt thinking we intended to stay all night.

As soon as he had left I rolled a couple of the largest logs we had collected for fuel endwise to the fire, and covering them with leaves and grass and one or two old newspapers, we made a pretty fair imitation of two men wrapped in their blankets—at least sufficiently good to deceive any one at a little distance, after dark.

By this time night had fairly set in and saddling our horses we mounted and rode off in the direction opposite to the one taken by the spy. The night was perfectly clear, and we had no difficulty in keeping the course we wished to pursue. We had gone perhaps a couple of miles when we distinctly heard the report of several guns in the direction of the camp we had left. "Dobell," said Mr. Pitt, "the logs are catching it now, and I think it much better to be killed and scalped by proxy than in 'propria persona.'" "Yes," said I, "and my log is perfectly welcome to every bullet and 'dog-wood switch' that was intended for me."

There is no doubt the Indians had attacked our camp and had fired upon the logs, supposing, of course, they were Mr. Pitt and myself wrapped up in our blankets. The nest was warm but the birds had flown, and you may be sure the report of guns did not retard their flight. Spurring up our horses we rode rapidly on for six or eight miles and then halted as we had done the night before in a small open space almost entirely surrounded by dense chapparal. Dismounting we staked our jaded horses on the grass, spread our blankets on the green sward and were soon fast asleep.

The next morning after a cold snack for breakfast, as we did not think it prudent to build a fire, we mounted our horses and took the way back to our trail. Shortly after we came to it we struck a heavily timbered bottom, near the edge of which we saw a house about half a mile to our left. Towards it we directed our course, but before we had gone more than two hundred yards we saw a man on horseback, with a deer tied behind his saddle, come out of the timber a short distance ahead of us. The moment he observed us he started off in a gallop towards the house, but finding we did not pursue him he halted until we got near enough for him to see we were white men, and then turned to meet us. As he rode up, he said, "Hello! strangers, which way are you traveling?" We told him we were going to a settlement on the head of the Lavaca; providing the Indians didn't "bag" us before we got there. "Well," said he, "it's expressly against orders for any one to pass Cayote ranch without stopping, so you may as well 'hold up your hands' and come along with me." "If that's Cayote ranch," said I, pointing to the the house, "we were just going there." "Oh well, that's all right," said he, "and you can drop your hands," and we then rode on together to the house. When we came to the gate, in front of the house, a crowd of little darkies and dogs ran out to meet us, and our companion greeted them all by their names, but there were such a number of them, crowded together, and their names were so similar, I couldn't tell which belonged to the darkies and which to the dogs.

Dismounting, we entered the house, and had scarcely taken the seats offered us, when an old negro woman came in, carrying a coffee-pot and a half dozen cups on a waiter. Evidently she thought it useless to ask if we would take coffee, for she proceeded at once to fill the cups and hand them around. When she handed one to me, by the way of a joke, I told her I never drank coffee, and the expression of astonishment depicted upon her wrinkled phiz could not have been greater if I had suddenly disappeared through the floor. But seeing me smile she said, "Shaw, chile, I know yous'e jokin'," and poured me out a cup, which I emptied with "ease and elegance."

At that day it was the universal custom, in Texas, to present a cup of hot coffee to the visitor as soon as he entered the house, and even yet, especially in thinly populated parts of the country, the coffee-pot is kept continually on the fire. So generally was the beverage used that the expression, "as common as coffee for breakfast," was as common among the old settlers as coffee itself.

Whilst we were discussing the beverage, our host imformed us that he had but lately settled at that place, having moved out there only a few months previously from the red lands in Eastern Texas, which, he said, were getting to be too thickly populated to suit him. He told us we were the first strangers he had seen in several weeks, and consequently he was entirely ignorant of everything that had occurred in the "States" for that length of time. Mr. Pitt drew a couple of *late* New Orleans papers from his pocket (they were not more than six weeks old), and gave them to our host, saying he would find all the *late* news in them. He eagerly clutched the papers, and I have no doubt he read them faithfully through without skipping a single advertisement. Newspapers in those days were much scarcer in Western Texas than —Iudians for instance, and I don't believe our host would have bartered either of those Mr. Pitt gave him for anything of less value than a sack of coffee.

When we had finished our coffee, Mr. Pitt got up and said we had better be moving on, but our host "flew off the handle" at once, and told us the motion had to be "laid on the table," indefinitely, as it was entirely against "parliamentary rules" for any one to leave Cayote ranch until they had broken bread with him. "It's a fact, though," he added, "that very often there is no bread to break on this ranch, for it is twenty miles to the nearest horse mill, but we have a hand mill and there's always plenty of 'grits.' I'll tell you a little anecdote," continued our host, "to satisfy you there is no prospect of your leaving Cayote until to-morrow, at any rate. I had been at this place about three weeks, without seeing a living soul except my own family and Sol Smith, my nearest neighbor, who lives six miles below on Burnt Root, and I was getting powerfully hungry for news, as you may suppose. One morning I had a kind of presentiment that a traveler would come along that day, so I picked up 'Old Bess,' my double-barrel shotgun, and went out to the corner of my fence near which the trail passes, and 'took a stand' for him. In about an hour sure enough I saw my man coming jogging along the trail. I knew he was a green one from the States, because he had his gun in a leather case tied to the horn of his saddle, and no old frontiersman ever carries his in that way unless he is with a strong crowd. I hid behind a large pecan tree, and waited till I saw he had passed the fork leading to Cayote, when I stepped out, and leveling 'Old Bess' at him I ordered him to halt. 'My God!' he exclaimed, 'do you intend to murder me?' 'Oh no,' said I, 'not if you obey orders and report yourself at once to headquarters according to regulations.' 'And where's that,' said he. 'Cayote ranch, yonder,' said I, 'so march,' and he marched, whilst I followed him with Old Bess at a present. As soon as I had got my man safely in the house I began on him, but as I suspected, he was green from the 'States' and chock full of news, and as he was a slow talker and the weather was bad besides, he didn't get away from Cayote for a week. So you see, gentlemen," continued our host, "there's no show for you to leave here until to-morrow at any rate, for 'Old Bess,' (pointing to the double-barrel on a rack) is in prime order with twenty-one 'blue whistlers' in each barrel."

We laughed and told our host there would be no necessity at all to take Old Bess from the rack, as we would willingly remain until morning. "But," said I, "I think it only fair to tell you that I am a very dangerous kind of character to tamper with in this way. My best girl used to say that I was like a hog,—that she had to pull my ears off to get me to visit her and then pull my tail off to get me away."

Our host laughed heartily at my little joke, and said, "All right, I've got you by the ears now, and if you stay here a month, I'm sure I shan't change 'eends.' To-morrow," continued our host, "if you insist on leaving, I will ride with you to the Bernard, which is pretty full, and dangerous to cross for one who doesn't know the ford." This settled the question, and thanking our host for his hospitable and *pressing* invitation to make ourselves "at home" we proceeded to do so without ceremony. Though rather behind the times as to recent events, we found our landlord was pretty well posted otherwise, and he gave us much valuable information in regard to matters and things on the frontiers.

CHAPTER III.

LEAVE CAVOTE RANCH—WITNESS A CLOSELY CONTESTED RACE BETWEEN TIM MCGARITY, PAT O'HOULIHAN AND A LARGE PARTY OF INDIANS—TIM IS DISTANCED, BUT PAT COMES IN AHEAD—THE SKELETON IN THE GROVE—ARRIVE IN THE VICINITY OF GOLIAD—THE FIRING OF MUSKETS IN HONOR OF ST. PATRICK KEEPS US OUT ALL NIGHT IN THE BRUSH—TONKEWA INDIANS—"FRONTIER HALL"—THE EXPLORING EXPEDITION, ETC.

The next morning, after breakfast, by pleading urgent business, we at length obtained the *consent* of our host to continue our journey, and very reluctantly he gave orders to have his and our own horses saddled. Mounting them, we followed our host, who led the way, through a heavily timbered bottom, to the ford across the San Bernard. When we came to it he gave us minute directions how to cross it safely, and bidding him good-by, we plunged into the stream and without difficulty reached the opposite bank. Following the directions he had given us, we went on about half a mile through the bottom, and then took a newly blazed road to the left, which soon led us into the open prairie. Taking our course through this, along a dim trail, about noon we came to the Colorado river, which was very high, and of course not fordable. However, we got a man who had recently settled near the crossing, to carry our guns and traps to the opposite side, in a dug out. Returning, we stripped our horses, and whilst our ferryman paddled, Mr. Pitt and I pulled them into the river by their lariats, and in this way they were soon safely landed on the western shore. Giving our ferryman a Mexican dollar, we saddled our steeds and took the trail again.

Our course from this point to the headwaters of the Lavaca, where Col. Rivers, Mr. Pitt's relative lived, would have been about northwest, but Mr. Pitt had some land matters at Goliad which he wished to attend to as speedily as possible, and we therefore concluded to take the direct route to that place. Not long after leaving the Colorado bottom we came to a pretty plain road which we took, as the ferryman had informed us it was the main road to Texana and Victoria, and from Victoria to Goliad. Between these points there were only one or two settlements at the time, and he warned us to keep a good lookout for "Injins;" but we saw none, although we crossed several fresh trails, and passed one or two recent encampments, and nothing of interest occurred on the route.

About noon of the second day after leaving the Colorado, we reached the city of Victoria. Victoria at that time contained about two dozen adobe huts, and a small frame building which we never would have taken for a hotel, but for a sign swinging in front on which the words "Victoria hotel" were faintly written, apparently with a piece of charcoal. As Mr. Pitt had been quite unwell all day, we concluded to stop at this hotel.

Our horses had scarcely been unsaddled and turned into the corral when a man came dashing through town on a bareback mustang yelling, "Indians! Indians!" as he passed. In a moment the whole place was in uproar and confusion; men running here and there in search of arms, women screaming, and children crying. Mr. Pitt and I hastily seized our guns and ran out to the edge of the village, where we saw half a dozen men standing together, and apparently gazing at some objects a mile or so distant on the prairie. "What's the row?" said I to one of the crowd, after we joined them. "Faith and be jabers," said Pat (most of the people at that time in Victoria were Patlanders), "it's looking at a lively race we are out yander betwixt Tim McGarity, Pat O'Houlihan and the bloody Injins." I turned my eyes in the direction they were all looking, and about a mile off on the prairie I saw two men coming as fast as their horses could run closely followed by a large party of Indians. I have seen a good many races in my time, but I never witnessed a more exciting one than this between the two Irishmen and the Indians—except on one or two similar occasions, when I was a rider myself. There was no "jockeying" in it. It was all fair and square running from the start to the outcome.

I had scarcely taken in the situation when I heard a shrill scream, and looking round saw a bare armed, red faced, strapping woman rushing up with her loose hair streaming in the wind. "Och ! ye skulking spalpeens," cried Mrs. O'Houlihan (for I suspected from the first she was the wife of one of the men pursued by the Indians), "Och ! ye skulking spalpeens, and are yez going to stand here all day wid yer fingers in yer mouth and see me puir Pat murthered before yer eyes. Take yer guns, ye cowardly loons, and go out at wanst and save a better mon than any of ye." But no one stirred, for, indeed, it would have been sheer folly for the few men in the place to have left the protection of the houses and gone out on foot to encounter such an overwhelming force of mounted Indians. (There were at least eighty or a hundred, as we could plainly see.) "O whirra! whirra!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Houlihan, wringing her hands, "me puir Pat will be murthered before me face, and you, ye chicken-hearted thaves o' the worruld, won't crook yer fingers to help him. May the widdys and the orphants curse be an ye, and your children's childer!"

At this juncture two or three of the bystanders grabbed Mrs. O'Houlihan and carried her off, in the last stages of hysterics.

By this time the race between the two Irishmen and the Indians was evidently drawing to a close. The Irishmen, only a few yards ahead of the foremost Indians, were now within a quarter of a mile of the village, and we could plainly see that McGarity's horse was failing fast, and that half a dozen of the leading Indians must soon overtake him. The poor fellow looked back frequently, and seeing the distance between himself and his pursuers was rapidly lessening, he plied whip and spurs vigorously, but all to no purpose, for in a few seconds the grim warriors were alongside of him, and we saw him fall from his horse, pierced with their arrows and lances. His fall made a slight diversion in O'Houlihan's favor, by retarding for a moment the pursuit of the foremost Indians, but they were quickly passed by others, and it was soon apparent he would share McGarity's fate if something was not speedily done to avoid it. We could not stand it any longer, and with one impulse the whole crowd exclaimed, "Boys, let's charge 'em!" and the next instant we were in a full run towards the Indians. This sortie was O'Houlihan's salvation. Just as the foremost Indians were leveling their lances upon him, we were in gunshot of them, and checked them by a volley from our rifles. They drew up suddenly, and O'Houlihan promptly taking advantage of the check we had given them, in a few moments was safe among his friends, who greeted his coming with hearty cheers. The Indians advanced no further, and we qnickly fell back to the shelter of the houses.

Pretty soon Mrs. O'Houlihan made her appearance on the field again, and rushing up to O'Houlihan she threw her brawny arms around his neck and hugged him till he was black in the face. I happened to be next to them, looking on admiringly at this little conjugal scene, when suddenly Mrs. O'Houlihan let go Pat, threw her arms around my neck, and I momentarily expected to be "garroted," too, but she only gave me a kiss, slightly flavored with onions, and then proceeded to favor the rest of the bystanders in the same way. "Och!" said she, "byes, I axes ye tin thousands pardins for all the hard wurruds I said to ye, for ye are the true grit afther all, and I'll thrate the last one of ye jest as soon as Mick Barrigan gits back from Texana wid the kag o' whuskey—but divel the drap can ye git tell he comes."

After the Indians had left we went out and brought in the body of poor Tim McGarity, which was horribly mutilated and that night he had the "dryest," and most peaceable "wake" I suppose that ever fell to the lot of an Irishman, for as Mrs. O'Houlihan had truly said, there was not a drop of the "craythur," to be had in Victoria for love or money.

The next morning Mr. Pitt and I were on the road to Goliad an hour before daylight in order to elude the observation of any straggling party of Indians, who might be lingering in the vicinity. But we saw none, and traveled on until about one o'clock in the day, when we halted near a thick grove of timber, some ten or twelve miles from Goliad. Staking our horses on the outside we entered the grove, and whilst looking around for some fuel to start a fire we came across the skeleton of a man. It was lying extended at full length upon the ground, and from some cause seemed never to have been disturbed by wolves or other wild animals, as not a bone was missing.

The moment Mr. Pitt's eyes fell upon the bleached bones of this skeleton, he turned deadly pale, and kneeling down by the side of it, he covered his face with his hands and wept like a child. I said nothing to him, for I knew at once what thoughts were passing through his mind. He had lost his eldest brother, to whom he was devotedly attached, at the Goliad massacre, but he had been informed by some one who escaped from that wholesale butchery, that his brother was seen several miles to the east of the San Antonio river after the massacre took place. I had no doubt, therefore, the idea occurred to him that the skeleton we found in the grove was that of his brother. At length he got up and began to cover the skeleton with leaves and the fallen branches of trees, and I assisted him to do so until the task was completed to his satisfaction. We then mounted our horses and took the road to Goliad again. Previous to this, my friend Pitt had cherished the hope that his brother had not been killed, but that he had been captured after making his escape from the massacre, and taken as a prisoner into Mexico; from that day, however, I never heard him allude to the subject again.

We had traveled some two or three miles along the road, when we overtook four or five Mexican carts driven by peons or serfs. I saw Mr. Pitt scowl upon them as we passed, and we had gone but a little distance beyond them, when he drew up his horse and proposed to me that we should turn back and kill those Mexican drivers. I saw in a moment that he was in dead earnest, for his teeth were clinched tightly and his eyes gleamed with a ferocity I had never seen before. I did my best to persuade him to abandon this bloodthirsty intention, telling him I had just as much cause to hate the Mexicans as he had, but that I would consider it a poor revenge for the murder of a brother to retaliate by murdering three or four ignorant peons, who, in all probability, had never been in the Mexican army in their lives; and besides, said I, if you should do so, you will commit an act you will bitterly regret as long as you live.

But all the arguments I could use seemed to have no effect upon Mr. Pitt, and at length he said that if I was afraid to go back with him, he would go alone. This nettled me, and I told him I would be no more afraid to attack those Mexicans than he was if there was any just cause for doing so, but that I did not intend to shoot down in cold blood a set of ignorant peons, who, as far as I knew, had never done me an injury—that he could do so if he wished, but that I washed my hands of such a deed and would take no part in it.

My persistent refusal to sanction his proposition finally brought my friend to his senses, and turning his horse, he rode on for an hour or so without saying a word to me. But I knew Mr. Pitt's character so well, I was satisfied as soon as he had a little time for reflection, that he would be conscious I had acted the part of a true friend towards him; and in fact, after riding several miles without speaking, he at length said: "Dobell, you have saved me from perpetrating a deed to-day I would have regretted as long as I lived." Nothing more passed between us on the subject, nor was any allusion ever made to it afterwards. Before we had gone much further Mr. Pitt said he felt quite unwell, and proposed we should stop a while under the shade of an oak growing solitary and alone in the midst of the prairie. We remained there so long that night had set in before we came to the top of a hill from which, I know that Goliad is visible in day light. Just as we reached the top we were astonished to hear a continuous firing of guns in the direction of the town. We drew up our horses and listened attentively. The firing was kept up at irregular intervals, and at length my friend said to me, "Dobell, what do you suppose is the meaning of that fusillade in town?" "Well," said I, "I really don't know. I left this place a year or so ago in rather a hurried manner, and the last thing I heard was the firing of musketry, and I suppose it has been going on ever since." Mr. Pitt laughed and said, "they must have had a good supply of ammunition on hand to have kept up a fusillade for that length of time; nevertheless, I can't understand it, unless the town has been attacked by Mexicans or Indians. What do you think we had better do?" "Well," said I, "I was once in a very tight place in that same town of Goliad, and I don't intend to get in another there, if I can help it. I think the best thing we can do under the circumstances, will be to leave the road and encamp in some safe place until morning. We can then reconnoitre the town from the heights on this side, and find out what the 'row' is before we venture in."

Mr. Pitt thought as I did, that the course I advised would be the most prudent one to follow, and we therefore left the road and took a dim trail along the top of the ridge (with which I was well acquainted, having traveled it frequently), which led us to the ruins of an old mission. It was surrounded by thick chapparal, which would serve to screen us from the prying eyes of any prowling Mexican or Indian, and stripping and staking our horses in a little open space just large enough to afford them room for grazing, we laid down upon our blankets without making any fire.

Whenever we were awake during the night we could see the flashing and hear the reports of guns in the town, and we came to the conclusion that the place was certainly beleaguered by some marauding party of Mexicans or Indians. Nothing, however, occurred to disturb us in our snug quarters.

As soon as day broke I got up and went to a point on the hill from where an unobstructed view of the town could be had. All seemed peaceful and quiet in the place, and after scanning the open country around it closely, and seeing no signs indicating the proximity of any Mexican or Indian force, I returned to camp and reported to Mr. Pitt the result of my reconnoisance.

Saddling our horses, we mounted them and soon regained the road we had left the evening before, which led us to the ford about half a mile below the town. Crossing the river there, in a few moments we entered the suburbs of the city. Seeing a man standing at the door of a shanty, we rode up to him and inquired what that shooting was for last night.

The fellow laughed, for he knew very well from our arrival at such an early hour, that the shooting had kept us out all night, and then replied to the question in unmistakable brogue: "And didn't you know, young mon, that this was 'Saint Patrick's day in the mornin'?' Faith, an' I suppose ye thought the Mexicans was givin' us a round and ye was afraid to come in." He guessed right the first time. At that day the Irish element largely predominated at Goliad—nearly all the Mexican population having abandoned the place and taken refuge in Mexico. As we subsequently learned, the fellow had told us truly, the firing we heard during the night was in honor of the "snake quelling saint."

There was a part of the Tonkewa tribe of Indians encamped not far from Goliad, who at that time professed to be friendly to the Texans, though a solitary wayfarer encountering them on the prairie in all probability would have had his hair lifted. They were a treacherous tribe and in the course of time were almost entirely exterminated in their frequent contests with the frontier settlers.

The next morning after our arrival at Goliad, the Tonkewas to the number of fifty or sixty, mounted upon their mustangs, rode into town, and invited any of the citizens who wished to do so, to go with them on a big deer hunt they intended to take that day. As I was anxious to see the hunt, I mounted my horse and fell into line in company with several of the citizens of Goliad. Mr. Pitt declined going, as he was still rather weak to take a hand in such fatiguing sport. The Indians carried no arms, neither guns nor bows, but each had a long lariat or cabresa tied to the horn of his saddle.

Leaving the town in "Indian file," the Tonkewa warriors started off in the direction of the rolling prairies to the southwest, where they knew the game they sought was to be found in abundance. We followed them closely, as we were curious to see their method of lassoing deer, which we had heard of but never witnessed.

After traveling five or six miles, we came to a locality where deer were more numerous than I had seen them elsewhere. Large herds, sometimes as many as eighty and a hundred in a herd, could be seen in every direction on the prairie. Here the Indians halted and separated themselves into squads of eight or ten, each squad being under the control of a leader. Holding their lariats in their hands, each squad then singled out a particular herd from those in sight, and slowly advanced towards them until the deer began to show signs of alarm, when, whooping and yelling, they charged at full speed upon them. My companions and I followed on after one of the squads as fast as our horses could go. The race was an exciting one, but it was soon ended, for the deer were fat, and the Indians quickly overtook them. Then the lassos began to whiz amongst the herd, and every now and then a deer was caught by the leg or horns and speedily dragged to the ground, and as speedily dispatched by the scalping knife. In less than an hour after the chase began, nearly all the herd we followed was captured and killed, none escaping except those in poor condition, which of course were not wanted. It was the most wholesale butchery of game I had seen.

When the Indians had killed as many deer as they wished, they dismounted from their horses and stripped the hides from the deer—occasionally cutting off a haunch or other choice piece, leaving the rest of the carcass to be devoured by wolves and vultures. I took but little pleasure in witnessing the destruction of so many deer merely to get their hides, and before the Indians finished skinning all they had killed, we started back to town, each with as much venison strapped to his saddle as could be conveniently carried. When deer are fat, they can easily be overtaken by one on a "good chunk of a pony" in the open prairie; but when they are poor, it takes a first rate horse and a light rider to overhaul them.

Mr. Pitt and I remained at Goliad several days, and then recrossing the river, we took our course towards the uppermost settlement on the Lavaca, where his relative, Col. Rivers, lived, following as closely as we could a "way bill" that had been given us by an old frontiersman. We fortunately encountered no Indians, although we passed several trails on the way. We traveled but short distances each day, as Mr. Pitt had not entirely recovered from the severe spell of sickness he had at Houston, and it was not until the morning of the fourth day after leaving Goliad that we came to outskirts of the settlement on the Lavaca. Riding up to the first house we saw, we asked a woman who was standing on the porch, how far it was to Col. Rivers' place. "Why, bless my soul," said she, "you must be strangers in these parts." We told her we were. "Kin folks of Col. Rivers, I reckon?" said she. Mr. Pitt owned up to the soft impeachment. "Well, do tell," said she, "and where be ye from, now?" Having answered this and half a dozen more leading questions, Mr. Pitt inquired again how far it was to Col. Rivers' place. "Why," said she, "he's our nighest neighbor. We kin e'en a'most hear the chickens crowing over there of a right still mornin'—its only five short miles." "Will you be kind enough, madam," said Mr. Pitt, "to give us the direction how to find the way there?" "To be sure," said she. "Do you see that lone tree out yander in the perara?" Mr. Pitt said he did. "Well," said she, "keep right straight on to that tree, and arter you pass it 'bout fifty or may be so a hundred yards, you will come to a cow trail, but don't you take that; go right straight across it, and purty soon you'll come to another; follow that tell you git to whar it splits, then take the right hand, or ruther, I should say, the left hand split, and it'll carry you into the road to Thompson's mill. Mind though, you take the left hand split." "I thought it was the right hand?" said Mr. Pitt. "Did I say the right hand? Well I meant the left hand, anyhow," said she, "and when you git to the mill road follow that till it splits—but you keep the straight forward split to whar it strikes the bottom, and there it sprangles off, so I can't say adzackly which split you do take. Howsomever, 'taint fur, anyway, from there to Col. Rivers', and I reckon you won't go wrong."

Mr. Pitt thanked the good lady for her precise and definite direction, and we were about to turn our course towards the "lone tree," when she stopped us with another question. "Anything strange," said she "from beyant?" "Strange!" replied Mr. Pitt, "haven't you heard the news?" "Good laws!" she exclaimed. "No, I haven't. We don't see a body in these parts in a coon's age." "And in fact, then, you haven't heard the news," said Mr. Pitt. "No," said she, "I tell you I hain't", and her eyes fairly sparkled with eager expectation. "Git down, young gentlemen, and 'skin a tater', and then you can tell me all about it." "Can't stop," replied Mr. Pitt, "only long enough to tell you the news. Party spirit is running so high in the trans-Atlantic States upon the question of the next presidential canvass, it is supposed that thousands and tens of thousands will have great difficulty in exercising the constitutional right of suffrage."

"Good laws!" exclaimed the old lady, "you don't tell me so?" "Yes," said Mr. Pitt, riding off, "it's true as gospel." "Do stop a bit, young gentlemen," said the old lady, who hadn't understood a word of Mr. Pitt's news, but who was convinced from the dolorous expression of his countenance that something dreadful had happened somewhere, "stop and tell me all about it." "Yes," said Mr. Pitt, riding on, and pretending not to hear what she said, "it's a fact, certain," leaving the old lady in a paroxysm of unsatisfied curiosity.

When out of hearing I said, "It was too cruel, Pitt, to excite the old lady's curiosity as you have, and then leave as you have, without gratifying it, particularly when she was so kind as to invite us to "light and skin a tater." "Not a bit of it," replied Mr. Pitt, "she deserved it all, and more too, for asking us so many questions, and for not giving us definite directions about our way." "But the fact is," added Mr. Pitt, "I have known a great many women who were intelligent, smart, and all that, but I have never seen one yet who could give directions how to go from one place to another, though they had traveled the road dozens of times; it's a curious idiosyncracy of woman kind." "Oh, bosh," I replied, "the old lady's directions are perfectly plain from the lone tree yonder to where the road 'sprangles out' in the bottom, and we won't have the least difficulty in following them." "I hope not," said Mr. Pitt, "for I am tired of camp fare, and would greatly prefer a good supper and a comfortable bed to-night."

As we rode along Mr. Pitt gave me a short history of his relative, Col. Rivers, and all the members of his family, in order that I might form some idea of the folks I would meet there. With the Colonel's oldest son, Lawrence, I was already well acquainted, as we had been school-mates for some time, before the family emigrated to Texas.

My prediction in regard to the old lady's directions proved to be true, and we had no difficulty in following them. Just as the sun was setting we came in sight of Col. Rivers' house, a large double log cabin, with wide porches in front and rear, and situated in a beautiful grove of elms and live oaks.

Mr. Pitt had written to Col. Rivers just before he was taken sick at Houston, by some one going to the settlements on the Lavaca, that he intended to pay him a visit shortly, and his coming was, therefore, not unexpected. As for myself, I had no doubt my school-boy acquaintance with his son, Lawrence, would insure me a cordial welcome.

Riding up to the front gate we dismounted, and scarcely had we done so when Col. Rivers and all the boys, a dozen darkies, and all the dogs, came pouring out of the house and yard to welcome us to Frontier Hall—the name the boys had given the place.

When the row had quieted down a little, Mr. Pitt took advantage of the "lull" to introduce me to his relatives, none of whom I had ever seen before, as I have said, except Lawrence. Willie and Henry, his two younger brothers, proffered their services to attend to the horses, and the rest of us adjourned to the house. The inevitable coffee-pot was soon brought in, and whilst we were sipping cups of the fragrant decoction, I answered, as well as I could, the numerous questions propounded me as to what was going on in the "States," and what particularly had occurred in Kentucky since they left there. Mrs. Rivers and her eldest daughter, Sophia, made many inquiries also about the latest styles of bonnets worn when I left the "States," and whether or not hoop-skirts still maintained their amplitude, or had dwindled in circumference. On these subjects I was profoundly ignorant, but Mr. Pitt, who either was in reality, or pretended to be better posted, came to my rescue, and gave them all the information they wanted in regard to the prevailing modes and fashions, and consequently he took a high position at once in the good opinion of Mrs. Rivers and his cousin, Miss Sophia. "It is a strange idiosyncracy" (as Mr. Pitt often said), "the importance the sex attaches generally to dress, and the fashions." "I verily believe," he would say, "that if one of them was cast away on a 'desolate island,' with no materials for making a dress, except a few yards of old sail cloth, she would carefully make it up in the 'prevailing mode'—low neck and short sleeves, if such was the fashion—even if the island was infested with millions of musquitos and sand-flies." [N. B.—As I am only a little on the shady side of "three score and ten," and do not wish to injure my matrimonial prospects, I take occasion to say that I do not endorse Mr. Pitt's outrageous slander on the sex.] But, nevertheless, it is true that Mrs. Rivers and Sophia were as much interested about the fashions, at Frontier Hall, as they could have been if they were residents of Broadway, New York.

After supper Col. Rivers gave me an account of his "experiences" since he came to Texas. He told me that for several months they had to undergo many hardships and privations, and that much of his stock had been killed or stolen by the Indians; that they had felt the want of many comforts and conveniences they had been accustomed to in Kentucky, etc., "but," he added, "we are getting used to it now, and I do not regret the move I made. The country is healthful, our stock is increasing in spite of Indian depredations, and the climate is all that one could wish. There is but one thing," he continued, "that troubles me much here, and that is the want of schools. I am afraid my boys will run wild, like the Indians, and forget all they have ever learned. However," continued the Colonel, "I am in hopes I shall be able to remedy this before long. I have secured the services of a competent teacher, who writes me he will be here in five or six weeks, and I shall expect my boys to quit the nomadic life they have been leading ever since we came to Texas, and apply themselves diligently to their studies. But," added the Colonel, "they wish to make the most of the time between this and the teacher I have employed, and for some days past they have been discussing a scheme for the exploration of a tract of almost unknown country, lying about the head waters of the Frio, Llano and San Saba rivers. I have not yet given my consent to this scheme, but perhaps I may do so if you and Pitt will agree to go along with the boys. I have confidence in your experience and prudence, and would feel much less anxiety for their safety if you could be induced to go with them." I thanked the Colonel for the good opinion he bad of my "experience and prudence," and assured him, speaking for myself, that I would be glad to accompany the boys on their proposed expedition. "Very well," said the Colonel, "I will think the matter over, but there is no hurry about it, as you and Pitt will have to remain here until your horses are recruited and in a condition to take the road again."

Col. Rivers, though by no means "straight laced" or bigoted, had been a member of the Methodist church for many years, and never neglected to have family worship at night, and when bed time came round everybody on the place, black and white, were assembled in the dining room, where he read them a chapter from the Bible, and offered up a customary evening prayer, after which all retired to their rooms.

Mr. Pitt, I and the three boys occupied a large "shed room" in which there were several beds. As soon as we were to ourselves, Willie, the youngest of the boys, said to me: "Oh, Mr. Dobell, I'm so glad you've come out here. You see pa has written for a schoolmaster, and when he gets here we'll all have to turn in to hard study, and give up our jolly rides and hunts for a long time; but, before we begin on the books, we want to have one famous blow-out, and then you see, we can settle down contentedly to geography, grammar and all that sort of stuff. Didn't pa tell you about it?" "Yes," said I, "he mentioned someting about your wanting to go on an exploring trip, but he didn't tell me he had given his consent." "Oh, yes, but he will, I am sure," said Willie, "if you and cousin Pitt will go with us (as of course you will) and you must talk to pa about it the first thing in the morning. I know he will let us go if *you* will ask him." In return for this bit of blarney I assured Willie I would do all I could to prevail on Col. Rivers to consent to the proposed expedition. "But where," said I, "does this unknown region lie which you wish to explore?" "There is a large scope of country," said Lawrence, "lying about the headwaters of the Frio, Llano and San Saba rivers, that has only been partially explored, and that is the country we wish to examine. The Mexicans say it is a fine region, that there are many little rich valleys on the streams, well timbered with white oak, pecan, walnut, etc., and that many silver and copper mines are supposed to exist in the high ranges of hills that intersect portions of it. The fact is," added Lawrence, "I have had a great desire to visit that section of country ever since I came to Texas, and I have spoken so much about going to see it 'some of these days' that I have at last inoculated Henry and Will with the mania for explorations, and they are both crazy to see the wonders of this unknown wilderness. The only objection," continued Lawrence, "my father has to the proposed trip is, that the country we wish to explore, is a favorite resort of marauding bands of Indians, who frequently stop in its secluded valleys to recruit themselves and horses, when on their way to and from the settlements. However," continued Lawrence, "they seldom go in large parties, and really I don't believe we would run much greater risk in traveling through that country than we do here daily riding around and hunting our stock. On the contrary, that probably we would not be in as much danger there as here, because when we were in the enemy's country we would always be on the lookout, and of course would be much better prepared in the event that we were attached."

"You are right about that," said I, "and I think Mr. Pitt and I can prevail upon Col. Rivers to give his sanction to the 'exploring expedition.'"

"Hurra! for you, Mr. Dobell," said Willie, "that's the way I like to hear you talk, and now that the thing is settled, I'll go to sleep, for I must be up soon in the morning, as there are lots of things to be done before we will be ready to start."

The next morning after breakfast whilst we were all still sitting at the table, I was given to understand by divers winks from Lawrence and Henry, and sundry "overt acts" on the part of Willie in the shape of nudges of the elbow in my side, that the time was propitious for broaching the subject of the "expedition." I therefore made a reconnoisance towards it, by asking Col. Rivers if there was much country still unexplored in Texas. "Oh, yes," he replied, "there is a great deal yet that has never been visited by white men, unless it has been by some wandering trapper or hunter—particularly that region of country the boys are so anxious to explore. There is but one difficulty I see in the way—or rather I should say two, in carrying the project into effect; one is for the boys to get their mother's consent to it, and the other to get Uncle Seth, as they call him, to take command of the exploring party. Uncle Seth," said Col. Rivers, observing my look of inquiry, "is an old frontiersman and hunter, who lives not far from here, and who is thoroughly conservant with the ways of Indians and all the mysteries of woodcraft. With Uncle Seth at the head of affairs I should have but little apprehension concerning the safety of the party."

"It's all settled, then," said Willie, to me in a whisper, "for Uncle Seth I know will jump at the chance of going, and as for ma, me and cousin Pitt together can get around her easy. Just let Mr. Pitt go and talk to her a while about the fashions and late styles till she's in a good humor, and then I can get her to agree to anything."

"I think," said Mr. Pitt, "that with proper prudence and precaution we will not run much risk of being scalped by the Indians—at least not more than we would riding around here, hunting and looking after stock." "I am of the same opinion," said Col. Rivers, "and as I have told you, already, the boys shall have my permission to go 'exploring' provided they can get their mother's consent, and persuade Uncle Seth to take charge of the party." When Col. Rivers had thus spoken, he rose from the table, took his broad brim felt hat from the peg where he always hung it, and went out to attend to the business of the farm. I then turned to Mrs. River, and in my blandest and most conciliating manner, asked her if she could not be prevailed upon to give her consent to our going on the exploring trip. "Well," said she, "I don't know. I am afraid the boys will be running a great risk and I should suffer from continual anxiety until they returned." [Here Willie, who thought, I suppose, I was not conducting negotiations in a very diplomatic way, whispered to me. "Get her in a good humor first—say something to her about the fashions or the modes and styles, or something of that sort."] "But," continued Mrs. Rivers, "it seems you have all set your hearts on this 'exploring expedition' as you call it, and I suppose I shall have to give my consent to it, but I assure you I do so very unwillingly." "Hurrah!" exclaimed Willie, giving me a nudge of triumph with his elbow that nearly dislocated one of my ribs, "I knew we'd bring ma to terms at last," and he hurried off to impart the joyful news of our success to the other boys, forgetting, with the heedlessness of youth, the anxiety his mother would suffer on his account, during his absence in the wilderness.

All the time that Mrs. Rivers, Willie and I were discussing the subject of the exploring trip, Miss Sophia had never volunteered an opinion, in fact, I am sure, she never heard one word we said, her attention being wholly engrossed by a glowing account Mr. Pitt was giving her of the last great fair at St. Louis (where I know he had never been in his life), winding up with a minute description of the splendid dresses worn by the ladies on that occasion. Ah! that fellow Pitt! There never was one like him in knowing exactly how to worm himself into the good graces of woman kind. He was all things to all of them. With the sentimental he would spout poetry, and talk about "congenial souls," and all that sort of thing, for hours. With the staid and sober he was as demure as an old tabby cat; with the gay and dashing he was bold and forward, and ready for any kind of escapade or mischief; with a "blue stocking" he was "literary" and could prate knowingly about all the "latest publications," and with the elderly ladies (who he said were his *speciality*), his studious politeness, and the deep interest he manifested whilst listening to detailed accounts of family matters, rendered him a universal favorite.

I have seen him sit by the hour when Mrs. so and so, for instance, was entertaining the company with a description of little Sammy's sufferings when he had the measles, and any one, judging from the eqpression of his countenance, would have supposed, that in his opinion, "Herod's massacre of the innocents," was a mere bagatelle compared to the agonies little Sammy had to endure when the measles "struck in." And yet Mr. Pitt was a real "Chevalier Bayard" sans peur at sans reproche."

A little while after Willie had left the room, I saw him through an open window, making some mysterious signs to me, and I went out to see what he wanted. "Mr. Dobell," said he, "brother Lawrence has had the horses saddled, and he wants you to go with him to Uncle Seth's place and let him know what's up. We don't want to lose any time, you see, for maybe so Uncle Seth might go off on one of his trips, and not come back for a month, which you know would 'flustrate' our arrangements." "All right," said I, "I am ready to go just as soon as I get my gun." At that day on the frontier (and Texas then, out side of the towns, was pretty much all frontier), nobody ever thought of going any distance from home without arms. Willie ran into the house and brought me my rifle and shot pouch, and then went with me to the gate where Lawrence was waiting for me with the horses. Just as we were starting Willie said, "Be sure, Mr. Dobell, to bring Uncle Seth with you, and when you get back you will find all hard at work, fixing up the traps for the trip." "Dead or alive" said I, "we'll have Uncle Seth."

CHAPTER IV.

MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF UNCLE SETH—HE FINALLY AGREES TO TAKE COMMAND OF THE EXPLORING PARTY—GIVES US OUR FIRST LESSON IN PRAIRIE CRAFT—CUDJO, THE COOK—LEAVE FRONTIER HALL—CAMP ON MARTINEZ CREEK—RATTLESNAKE—CUDJO TELLS WHAT HE KNOWS ABOUT SNAKE CHARMING.

After an hour's brisk canter Lawrence and I came in sight of Uncle Seth's little cabin, which was snugly anchored under the shady boughs of a grove of live oaks. Riding up to the gate we dismounted and walked in. Luckily Uncle Seth was at home, for, as Lawrence had told me, he was frequently absent for days at a time, hunting and herding his small stock of ponies and cattle. Uncle Seth had evidently noticed our approach, for he came out to meet us before we had gone half way from the gate to the house.

"Hey! boys, you are out airly this mornin'," said he, when we came within speaking distance, "what's up now? Injins about down your way?" "Oh, no," replied Lawrence, "all's right at our settlement, but Mr. Dobell and I have come over to-day to see you on some particular business; very particular business. I hope you are in good humor this morning, for we have got a favor to ask of you, which you must grant whether you are in a good humor or not." "Well, well, boys," said Uncle Seth, "I'll do the best I kin for you; but come into the shanty and we'll talk about it there."

The shanty was not an imposing edifice by any means, being about fifteen feet one way by twelve the other, and was rather scantily supplied with furniture—three or four wooden chairs, a cot, and a small deal table comprising nearly the whole outfit. However, it answered Uncle Seth's purposes, no doubt, very well, at least he seemed as well satisfied with the accomodations it afforded as a millionaire could have been with his palatial residence.

"Draw a stool, boys," said he, as we entered the cabin, "and tell me what's up now. I know there's some scheme on hand, and that you want me to help you." "You are right, Uncle Seth," said Lawrence, "we have a scheme on hand, and we can't carry it out unless you will assist us." He then proceeded to tell Uncle Seth of the exploring trip we wished to make through the unknown regions about the head waters of the Frio, Llano and San Saba rivers, winding up by telling him Col. Rivers had consented to let us go, upon the sole condition that he would take command of the party, "for you know, Uncle Seth," continued Lawrence, with a little well timed blarney, "pa has more confidence in your knowledge of the woods, and the ways of the Indians, than in that of any one else in the settlement."

When Lawrence had finished his "little speech" Uncle Seth drew a plug of tobacco from a pocket of his hunting shirt, bit off a piece about the size of a goose's gizzard, and began to chew it vigorously, every now and then stopping to spit at a knot hole in the puncheon floor. At length he said, "Boys, I would like mitily to go along with you, it's a fact, fur we would have a fust rate time, there's no doubt of that. I have never been farther up the way you speak of goin' than the head of the Llano, and I jest seed enough of the country to make me want to see more—best "country out of doors," and the bar, deer and turkeys are as thick as pig tracks round a barn yard, and every doted tree is a bee-hive full of honey. But you see, boys," continued Uncle Seth, taking aim at the knot hole, and knocking out the center, "the Injins is purty thick in them diggins, too, and I don't adzactly like to shoulder the responsibility of bringing you all back safe with the har still growing on the top of your heads. Injins, you know, are powerful fond of sculps, and they'll run a heap of resk sometimes to get one. I should feel mity bad if any of you should have your har lifted before we got back, and I reckon your pap wouldn't have such a high opinion then of your Uncle Seth as he has now." "Howsomever," he continued, taking another deliberate pop at the knot hole, "I know you chaps are bent on goin', and ruther than disappint you I'll agree to go with you, perviden you will promise ter do jest as I tell you—travel when I say go, camp when I say camp, and fight like young wild cats when I gin the word."

Lawrence assured Uncle Seth that he should have complete control of everything; that we would do just as he told us, whatever he might think necessary for the safety of the party.

"And how many will there be in the party?" asked Uncle Seth. "Well," replied Lawrence, "there's Mr. Dobell and myself, that's two; Henry and Willie, that's four; and you and Cousin Pitt, that's six. I don't count in Cudjo, as he'll go along to take care of the camp." "Then there'll be eight on us in all," said Uncle Seth, "countin' in Cudjo?" "How so?" said Lawrence. "Why, you see," said Uncle Seth, "I'll count for two, and I ain't braggin' at all when I say so, for you know that ain't my way; but a man who is a good woodsman and trailer, and up to all the dodges of the Injins, ort to be ekal to two green ones that hasn't larnt their ways. But six men ort to be able to hold their own agin twenty or thirty Ingins, and its not likely we'll meet 'em in bigger crowds than that. With six men well 'heeled,' and of the sort it will do to 'tie to,' I wouldn't be the least mite afeared to go from here to the Rocky Mountains. And when do yo intend to make a start?" evidently as anxious to be off as we were. "Just as soon as we can get ready," said Lawrence. "We expect you to be at Frontier Hall in the morning, for we want you to help us to fix up our traps, especially the rigging for our pack mule, which you can arrange much better than any of us." "We'll look for you certain," added Lawrence, getting up to leave. "I'll be on hand, you may depend," said Uncle Seth; but hold on a little, you must have a bite before you go. I found a bee tree to-day, and upped a buck that cut a half inch of solid fat on the ribs." "I thank you, Uncle Seth," said Lawrence, "but we are not at all hungry, and besides, we can easily get home by dinner time." "If I am to have command of this here scout," said Uncle Seth, "I order you to take your seats. The first thing a fellow has to larn when he's out on the peraras, is to eat every time he kin git a chance, fur there's no tellin' when he may have another. In time of peace, you know, prepare fur war." Wishing to humor Uncle Seth, Lawrence and I took our seats again, and in a little while a pot of hot coffee, a couple of fat, juicy steaks about the size of my foot (I wear No. 8), and a dish of fried hominy, were smoking on the table, to say nothing of a pail filled with honey in the comb. We drew up our stools to the table at Uncle Seth's invitation, and although Lawrence had asserted we were not at all hungry, I noticed he had but little difficulty in worrying down a cup of coffee, the better part of his steak, and about half a pound of honey. As for myself, I went through my portion without a hitch in the programme.

When we had finished, Uncle Seth said, "Now boys, you kin go whenever you're ready. I've gin you your fust lesson, and I must say, you've done as well as I could expect." Bidding Uncle Seth good-by, and telling him to be sure and come over early in the morning, we went out, mounted our horses, and took the road home. When about half a mile from the Hall, we saw Willie on his pony coming to meet us. "Why, what's been the matter?" said he, when he came within speaking distance, "you have been gone long enough to have made a trip to San Antone. I hope you found Uncle

Seth at home. But what's the reason you didn't bring him along with you? And what did Uncle Seth say?" said he, not waiting, in his eagerness to learn the news, for an answer to any of his questions. "Oh, Uncle Seth is all right," I replied, "and will come over early in the morning." "Hurrah for our side!" exclaimed Willie, giving my horse a whack across his withers, instead of his own, with his quirt. "Hurrah for the the San Saba! We'll be off now in a jiffy. Ma is hard at work now on the tent, Cudjo is baking hard bread and parching coffee, and Henry, as usual, is going round bothering everybody and doing nothing himself. Whoop! but won't we have a glorious time of it, Mr. Dobell," said he, as he gave my horse another whack that came very near making him throw his rider. "Whoop! won't we have a glorious time!" and off he scampered ahead of us towards the house.

On our arrival there, we found all hands busily engaged in preparing everything requisite for a complete outfit, except Mr. Pitt, who was too much occupied in playing the agreeable to Cousin Sophia to attend to anything else. Cousin Sophia had managed in some way to have her piano brought along with the rest of the household goods from their old home in Kentucky, but either the climate of Texas was not favorable to the health of pianos, or else the numerous jolts and jarrings it had sustained on the road had ruined its tone; and, although neither her vocal nor instrumental performances were much to brag of, nothing pleased Cousin Sophia more than to be called upon to entertain the company with a little music. Of course Mr. Pitt had observed this amiable weakness in Cousin Sophia, and consequently he never failed when the occasion offered, to beg her to favor him with "one more song," when everybody else had had enough of them, and one or two to spare; pretending to be extravagantly fond of music, when I know he had no more ear for it than a peafowl. As we entered the house, the jangling of the old asthmatic piano greeted our ears (for my part, I would have preferred listening to the flipping of a splinter on a fence rail), and we heard Mr. Pitt, every now and then, exclaiming, "beautiful!" "lovely!" etc. "Do you know, Cousin Sophia," he said, "that your voice reminds me forcibly of Jenny Lind? a sort of Æolian cadence and mocking-bird thrill combined, that transports one from the dull realities of existence into the dreamy lands of imagination!" Oh! that fellow Pitt! To my certain knowledge, he had never heard Jenny Lind sing in his life.

Mrs. Rivers was busily engaged in sewing the tent, and tried her best to look as cheerful and well pleased as the rest of us, but I am sure if she could have had her own way, that the exploring expedition would have been promptly knocked on the head, or at any rate, that she would have put her veto on Willie's going; but it was too late then to make any further opposition to it.

The next morning, according to promise, Uncle Seth put in an appearance before breakfast. Willie, who was on the lookout for him, saw him coming when he was yet a quarter of a mile off on the prairie, and ran to meet him. By the time they had reached the gate we had all assembled there to meet the commander-in-chief of the expedition. He was dressed in a full suit of buckskin, and mounted on a stout and rather shabby looking gelding, but which (as we subsequently discovered), had a deal of "come out" in him. He had his long, old fashioned flint and steel rifle on his shoulder and a bowie knife, and a pair of large derringer pistols were stuck in his belt. His shot pouch and powder flask were hanging to the horn of his saddle, and various other things were fastened to the numerous leather thongs with which it was garnished.

Dismounting deliberately from his horse, Uncle Seth hitched him to the gate post, and we all went to the house. "I am glad to find, Uncle Seth," said Lawrence, "that you are a man of your word. You are here according to promise, and armed and equipped as the law directs." "Oh, yes," replied Uncle Seth, "when I say I'll be at a place at sich an hour or day, I'm ginerally there or thereabouts when the time comes, perviden the creek ain't past fordin'; but I don't know so well about bein' armed as the law directs. We hain't much law of any sort in this country, and I commonly heels myself accordin' to my own notions."

"What do you think," said Col. Rivers to him, "of this exploring expedition? Don't you believe the boys will stand a good chance of having their hair lifted, as you call it, before they get back?" "No, I don't," said Uncle Seth, confidently. "It will be the best thing in the world for 'em, and they will larn more in two months on the peraras, than they would at school in a year—leastwise 'bout some things—and ef they'll only be good boys and mind what I tell 'em, I'll bet my stock of 'long horns' agin a stump tail yearlin' that I'll bring 'em all back safe with the har still growin' on the top of their heads."

"That's the way I like to hear you talk," said Willie. Now, ma, I hope you are satisfied Uncle Seth will take good care of us," said he, turning to his mother; and in fact, I believe Mrs. Rivers was much consoled by the confident manner in which Uncle Seth had spoken of bringing the boys back safely. "Remember," said Col. Rivers to him, "I give you full command on this expedition, and whenever the boys disobey you I wan't you to bring them home at once." "Oh, I've no fear 'bout that," said Uncle Seth; "but," he said, turning to Lawrence, "what sort of 'shootin' irons' do you intend to take on the trip, fur they are the fust thing we've got to look arter." "We have all kinds of guns here," replied Lawrence, "shot guns, rifles and muskets, and we will take whichever you think the best." "Well," said Uncle Seth, "if that's so, I think you all had better take double barrel shot guns." "How comes it then," said Lawrence, "that you carry a rifle?" "Why, you see," replied Uncle Seth, "it is always best to have a rifle or two on scouts, because they's mity handy to kill game with, and besides, I am so used to Injins and their ways, that their yellin' and howlin' don't give me the buck ager now, as it does green ones, which you know is apt to spile a feller's sight. The rifle is a poor weppin in the hands of a chap that's got the buck ager on him. I don't mean," said Uncle Seth apologetically, "that the boys would be scared, but anybody, you know, is almost certin to have the ager the fust time they gits in a scrimmage with the Injins. — I remember mity well the fust time I ever tackled 'em, when I went to reload my rifle I couldn't find the muzzle for a spell —and she carried a half-ounce bullet. But with the double barrel shot gun, you see, it's different, for no matter how much a feller may be flustrated, with twenty-five or thirty 'blue whistlers' in each barrel, its mity sure to hurt somebody when it goes off. Rifles is good to git your 'fresh' with, but the double barrel shot gun's the weepin fur Injins."

"Since I come to think about it," said Lawrence to Uncle Seth, "there are only five good shot guns on the place, so that somebody besides you will have to take a rifle." "All right," said I, "I have never used a shot gun much anyhow, and I'll stick to my rifle, even though I should have the 'buck ager,' as Uncle Seth calls it, I can shoot with the 'double wabble.'" "Very well," said uncle Seth, "that's all settled. You and me will take our rifles and the rest shot guns—and how about pistols," he continued, "fur they's mity handy to have in a clost tussle." "We've all got a good pair of 'derringers' apiece, and holster pistols, too, if you think it best to take them," said Lawrence. "Never mind the holsters," said Uncle Seth, "they are are powerful worrying to a horse's withers, and besides 'taint a good plan to hamper yourself with too many shootin' irons. You know the old sayin', "the man that works with one tool understands the use of it," and he is mighty sure to keep it in good order. Now," he continued, "I'll tell you what we'll want besides guns and pistols, so you kin go to work at onct—a tent to keep our ammernition and pervisions dry in rainy weather; as fur ourselves, we ain't salt ner shugger, and a wettin' now and then won't hurt us much; then we'll want 'bout a hundred pounds of 'Old Ned' (midling bacon), a hundred pounds of hard tack, thirty pounds of coffee, parched, but not ground, ten pounds salt, a little shugger, for them that uses it, a few pounds of rice ef you've got it, some pepper, one *large* coffee pot, one axe, one hatchet, one fryin' pan, a dozen tin plates, a spoon or so, and in course every one will carry his own tin cup, butcher knife and stakin' rope. One thick blanket apiece," continued Uncle Seth, "will be enough at this time of the year, but every one must have plenty of powder, shot and flints, besides fifty rounds of cartridges, which are only to be used in case of a scrimmage; and when we are fixed up in that way I'll undertake to carry you all safe to Calaforny, if you want to go there, in spite of all the Injins on the peraras."

The packsaddle, with some leather, buckskin and other materials, was turned over to uncle Seth to be rigged, and the rest of us went to work, cleaning and oiling our guns and pistols, moulding bullets, making cartridges (for at that day they were not to be had ready made), and packing up whatever we thought would be needed on the expedition, in strong cloth wallets. I said the rest of us, but I must except Mr. Pitt, who was so busy "setting up" to Cousin Sophia he hadn't time to attend to anything else. All day long (with short interludes at meal times, etc.), I could hear the old rattletrap piano going, and occasionally an exclamation from Mr. Pitt, such as delightful! splendid! etc., and once I heard him say, "Do play that little song once more; it's a perfect "olla podrida" of soul and sentiment, music and melody," but to me it sounded exactly like the hammering of a tinker on his pans. However, I made all due allowances for Mr. Pitt, for I knew very well as soon as we took him out on the prairie, away from woman kind, "Richard would be himself again," and as efficient as any of us.

After I had finished my task I went to where Cudjo, our future boss of the cuisine, was parching coffee and baking hard tack. "Well," said I, "Cudjo, how do you like the idea of going on this exploring expedition with us?" "Oh, I like berry well, Mass Jack," said he, "to go wid you all on dis sploring trip, but spoe'n dem wild Injins cotch us, wot den?" "Why they would make short work of me and the boys," said I, "but they wouldn't kill you." "Wot dey do wid me, den?" said Cudjo. "Oh, they'd take you along with them," said I, "and make you wait on 'em, black their moccasins, brush their hunting shirts, and cook for them sometimes when they have any prisoners fit to butcher. Do you know how to make a nice hash out of a man's feet and hands?" "No, dat I don't" said Cudjo emphatically, "en I ain't gwying to cook 'em for nobody, but you don't tell me for true, Mass Jack, dat dey eats people, do you?" "Yes," said I, "they eat the feet and hands of all they kill in battle, and sometimes the hearts of those who have fought bravely." "Den I ain't gwying one foot wid 'em," said Cudjo, "da kin jes kill me fust." "But you musn't let 'em do that," said I, "you must fight 'em as long as you can shoot." "I'll do dat, sartin," said he, "only gib me a gun, en I'll pop at 'em tell de cows come home. I ain't gwying wid nobody dat eats people's foot and hand."

Two days after Uncle Seth came over to Frontier Hall, we were ready to start on the trip, the tent was finished, the pack saddle rigged, and all our provisions stowed away in the haversacks.

The morning afterwards, we saddled our horses, packed our provisions and camp equipage on a big, stout mule, and bidding good-by to the folks at Frontier Hall, we mounted and started off on our long talked of "Exploring Expedition." Uncle Seth had spoken so confidently about making the trip safely, that he had succeeded in a great measure in quieting Mrs. Rivers' fears, and she didn't "take on" as Willie said, as much as I expected she would when we left.

I really felt sorry for Cousin Sophia, for I knew very well after Mr. Pitt's departure, there would be no one to listen *willingly* to the jangling of the old piano, and to exclaim at the conclusion of every song or piece of music "how beautiful," etc. But I am sure the rascal had listened and exclaimed to some purpose, for just as we were about to start, I saw Cousin Sophia slyly hand him a small parcel, which I suspected was a "billet doux," but I afterwards ascertained it was only some sentimental farewell verses.

"Don't you fret about us, ma," said Willie, as he gave his mother a parting kiss, "we'll all get back safe, you may be certain, and then I'll study my books as I promised pa, for a whole year. Won't it be a drag, though," said he to me, as we rode off, "only think Mr. Dobell, of a fellow's having to study grammar, g'ography, 'rithmetic and all that tiresome stuff for twelve long months at a stretch. It's enough to make a fellow sick just to think of it. It ain't half as good fun as scampering over the prairies on my pony."

"I suppose not," said I, "but then I am sure you do not wish to grow up an ignoramus, which you certainly will if you do nothing but scamper over the prairies on your pony."

"Yes, I know that," replied Willie, "and I'm going to study hard when I come back—but I'll have one good 'blow out' before I begin, anyhow."

As we rode off from the house our little party made quite a formidable and warlike appearance, with our guns across our shoulders, and our butcher knives and pistols stuck in our belts. Uncle Seth led the van, Mr. Pitt, Lawrence, Henry and myself composed the "main body," Cudjo leading the pack-mule was the rear guard, whilst Willie scampering here and there, sometimes in front, sometimes on the flanks, served as a kind of vidette or lookout for the whole party. Cudjo was mounted on a half-breed horse (his dam being a full blooded mustang) and he took after his mother, not only in appearance, but in qualities, for he had a Roman nose, white eyes and protuberant stomach, and was a most expert "pitcher" whenever he wanted to get rid of his rider. Cudjo had a short double barrel shot gun slung across his shoulders and from his saddle bow dangled his shot pouch, to which was attached a powder horn of such huge dimensions that Willie at once christened it "the magazine." These, together with other traps tied to the thongs of his saddle, gave him quite the look of a dusky brigand, returning from a successful foray.

Uncle Seth led the way across the prairie, for at that time there was no direct road from the settlement where Col. Rivers lived to the city of San Antonio.

When we had gone perhaps a mile, Uncle Seth halted us, and asked us to keep quiet a bit, as he had a few words to say to us before we went farther. "Now boys," said he, "I want to have a little onderstandin' with you all afore we git in the Injin range. I told your pap I would do all I could to take care of you while we was on this scout; but I told him, too, I wouldn't shoulder the responsibility of fetching you all back safe, onless you'd agree to do whatsomever I thought was best, and he said you all had promised to obey orders—I s'pose that's so?" "Yes," said Lawrence, "we all promised pa that we'd do whatever you ordered us to do, as long as we are out on this trip—if it's to fight, we'll fight, and if its to run, we'll run, and say, 'devil take the hindmost.'"

Uncle Seth laughed at this, and said: "There's no use in runnin' from Injins onless you're mity clost to the fort. But as you say you've all agreed to do as your Uncle Seth says, the fust thing I've got to tell you is, that I want you always to keep clost together, and not go squanderin' about, one here and another yonder, like a drove of half grown turkeys, and always to keep your guns and pistols in good shootin' trim and well loaded. And if you shouldn't see an Injin fur a month, don't take up the igee that there ain't sich a thing as an Injin in the country, fur jest when you come to think that away, like as not they'll pounce down on you. That's just how it is, that so many scoutin' parties has had their hair lifted on the peraras of Texas. For a few days they is ginerally mity cautious, and all the time on the lookout fur "Mr. John," but arter a while, when they never see an Injin and no 'sign' of 'em, they gits careless and begin to think there's no danger, and that it's no use to keep guard at night, and to be always on the watch, consequence is, at the very minit they think there ain't an Injin in forty mile of 'em, and like as not one-half their guns ain't loaded and they are scattered long the road fur half a mile, they hears the war whoop and the har flies from their heads afore they knows what's the matter. Now, I hain't no notion of bein tuck on serprise in that way, and I want you always to keep clost together when we're on the road, and when in camp always to put a guard out; and though there ain't much danger of meetin' Injins 'twixt here and Saint Antone, we will commence at onct so it will come easy to you when we git in the Injin range."

We again assured Uncle Seth that we were willing to do whatever he thought best, whereupon he turned his horse and rode on, whilst we followed in single file but well closed up according to "orders."

Cudjo had a good deal of trouble to-day with the pack mule, which would frequently stop in spite of his quirt and "blessings," to nip at the grass; but he was soon broken in, and from that time on he would follow us like a dog. All we had to do was to put the pack on securely and turn him loose, now and then giving him a passing glance to see if any of the traps tied to the saddle were missing or out of balance.

Our course to-day led us over a beautiful undulating country, mostly prairie, but interspersed here and there with groves, giving it a park-like appearance. We passed many herds of deer, and several of antelopes on the way, but we did not attempt to kill any of them, as shooting on the march was against Uncle Seth's orders. "'Twont do," said he to Henry, when he expressed a wish to make a "dash" into a herd of the latter, "we've got a long road ahead of us, and we mnst save our horses all we can, or may be so, some on us will have to ride 'Shanks' mar' afore we git back, and 'Shanks mar,' you know, boys," continued Uncle Seth, though she's a safe and reliable animule on the long run and never shies ner pitches, is a very slow critter, and a mity tiresome one to travel fur, and besides," he added, "you couldn't catch them anterlopes, nohow."

About three o'clock in the evening we came to a large grove of live oak trees near which there was a deep pool of water, the very head, Uncle Seth said, of Martinez creek, and here he decided to pitch camp. "We've made but a short ride to-day," he said, "but there's no hurry, and it's always best not to push the animals at the start, and besides," he added, "if we pass this water, it's not likely we'll find any more tell we git to the Salado." There was a large herd of deer feeding on the prairie about half a mile from camp, and Uncle Seth said, while we were stretching the tent, he would go out and get some "ven'son" for supper. "Why," said Lawrence, "how do you expect to approach those deer in the open prairie? They will certainly run before you can get in rifle range of them." "Yes," said Uncle Seth, "I know they'll run, but it will be towards me—you watch and see if they don't," and saying this he primed his rifle afresh and started off for "ven'son," whilst Lawrence and I watched his movements, as we wanted to learn how to stalk deer in open ground. Uncle Seth walked slowly towards the herd, until he saw the deer begin to raise their heads and show other signs of alarm, when he laid down in some bunches of grass. Then he tied his red handkerchief to his ramrod, and waved it backward and forward above the grass. Pretty soon the deer noticed the signal, and evidently were curious to know what it meant, for they started towards it, but stopped beyond rifle shot, as though they were a little suspicious it meant no good. Then we saw Uncle Seth lower his flag, and hoist one foot and then the other above the grass, and occasionally throwing tufts of it into the air. These strange and unusual movements so roused their curiosity, that the whole herd started in a full run for the place where Uncle Seth was lying, and when as it seemed to us, the foremost deer were almost on him, we saw a puff of smoke, and one of them fall to the ground before we heard the report of the gun. Just then, Willie, who had gone to a small thicket near by to cut some tent pins, cried out, "come here fellows, and see this monstrous snake!" We all picked up clubs and hastened to the place, but before we came in forty steps of it, we could hear the "singing" of the snake's rattles—and a very peculiar sound it is—one not to be mistaken for any other, when once heard. The snake, a very large one, was lying in its coil, ready for striking, and apparently much enraged at Willie for having intruded upon his premises.

Lawrence advanced with a club intending to kill him, when I said, "hold on Lawrence, and let Cudjo get a crack at him, he'll fix him in short order." "Oh, no," said Cudjo, backing off from the venomous reptile, "I ain't gwying to push myself ahead of buckra—dis nigger learn better manners den dat—let Mass Lawrence fix 'um. So Lawrence "fixed him" with repeated blows of his club, and dragged him out into the open ground. Willie, who had a measuring tape in his pocket took his dimensions, and found that he was six feet, five inches long, and ten inches around the middle. He had fourteen rattles and a button. "Ki !" exclaimed Cudjo, who had ventured up when he saw the snake was dead, "ki! what he got in he inside? Bress de Lawd I'm gwying to see," and drawing his butcher-knife, he cut the snake open near the middle, when out popped a full grown rabbit. "Why, how did he catch that fellow?" said Willie to Cudjo. "He 'charm' 'em sah," replied Cudjo. "He thess look in he eye, and de ole har' squeal an' try ter run away, but it tain't no use, for he jess run roun' an' roun' in a ring, ebery time gittin' little closter to de debbil's mouf, tell at las' he run right down he troat; it's de trute I'm tellin' yer, Mass Willie, fur I see 'em do it many time." "And do they ever charm people?" said Willie. "Dat dey does," replied Cudjo. "My Uncle Cæsar tole me, he see his darter Sukey one day in de 'tater patch runnin' roun' thess like a rabbit and screamin' loud as she could, and when he went to see what was matter wid her, dar lay a big snake in he quile, dat turn he head when she run roun' and look her plum in de eye. And he say, if he didn't cotch holt of her and jerk her away, she run right inter dat snake's mout shore, and jess as soon as de snake couldn't keep he eye on hern, she come to her senses and walk straight off to de house."

Whilst Cudjo was telling us what he knew about snake charming, Uncle Seth came into camp with the haunch and saddle of a buck he had killed, tied up in the hide and slung across his shoulders. "Now, boys," said he, as he threw the bundle on the ground, you kin start a fire as soon as you please, and we'll have some supper." "We have just killed a fat rattlesnake," said I, "and I am told they are splendid when fried brown and crisp, suppose we get Cudjo to cook a piece of him for supper, just by way of experiment." "What?" said Cudjo, "cook a piece of dat snake fur supper! I ain't gwying to 'speriment in no sich a way. Ef Mass Jack want to eat 'um, he kin jess cook a piece fur heself on de coal, I won't muss up my fry pan wid de rusty ole sarpint, dat's shore. Ki! who ever hear'n tell of folks eatin' snake?"

The fire was soon kindled, the coffee pot put on, and in half an hour or so, Cudjo informed us that the steaks were done and supper ready. We didn't keep it waiting for us long, for we had taken breakfast early and our ride had whetted our appetites amazingly. The steaks were done to a turn, the coffee was hot and strong, and our hard tack sopped in rich gravy wasn't "hard to tackle."

"See here, Henry," said Willie to him as he helped him to the third piece of steak, "I think it about time for you to knock off. We'll have breakfast in the morning." "Oh, dry up," replied Henry, "you've ate two pounds of steak to my one." "You know that's not so," said Willie, "I'm sure if I had ate as much as you have, I shouldn't expect to live till morning." "If I were an insurance agent," said Lawrence as he sipped his third cup (a tin pint) of coffee, and swallowed the last mouthful of a pound steak, "I wouldn't insure the life of either of you until morning on any terms." "Eat as much as you want to, boys," said Uncle Seth, "'taint goin' to hurt you—it's a curus thing, but it's a fact that a feller kin stow away three times as much 'grub' campin' out on the peraras, without hurtin' him, as he kin at home."

At length, however, everybody was satisfied, and then Uncle Seth said, "Now boys, some one's got to stand guard—who will it be?" "I will," said Lawrence. "No," replied Uncle Seth, "I reckon Willie had better have the fust watch, fur he's the youngest—you kin take the next two hours, and the rest of us will take our turn 'till daylight. But I want to tell you one thing," said he to Willie, "whenever you're on guard at night in an Injin country, don't you go prancin' backards and foreds like a reglar soldier on his post—it looks kinder milintary I know, but you see that don't pay a feller fur gittin a hole druv through him with a dogwood switch—jest take a seat at the root of a tree, or behind a bush, and keep your eye skinned on everything that's moving." Willie promised Uncle Seth that he wouldn't go parading backwards and forwards on his post, and picking up his gun, he went out and took his station according to orders, near where we had staked the horses. "Now boys," said Uncle Seth, "we must all go out and stake our animules on fresh grass, and then every one kin turn in when he gits sleepy." But Cudjo hadn't waited for orders, for he was already fast asleep, with *his head* instead of his feet to the fire. "I think," said Henry, "that Cudjo ought to take his turn at standing guard as well as the rest of us." "No," said Uncle Seth, "Cudjo does mity well to cook steaks and mind camps, but you see, a nigger is naterally a drowsy sort of animule anyhow, and goes to sleep jest as easy as slippin' off a greased log, when he is comfortably fixed."

The night was warm and pleasant, and no one slept in the tent; every one spreading his blanket on the soft grass just where it suited him. Next morning Willie was the first one up, and he soon roused the whole camp. Mr. Pitt, who had the last watch, grumbled a good deal at being disturbed so early, but finding it impossible to sleep on account of the noise and bustle in camp, he reluctantly abandoned his "downy couch." In the meantime, Cudjo prepared breakfast, and as soon as it was ready, we all fell to, with appetites as keen as if we had gone to bed supperless. The horses were brought in and saddled, and mounting them, we struck out again for the city of San Antonio, well pleased with our first night's bivouac on the prairie.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN FOR SAN ANTONIO—REACH THE CITY AND TAKE A LOOK AT THE ALAMO AND THE OLD MISSIONS—BOWIE AND CROCKETT—SEVERE FIGHT BETWEEN CITIZENS OF SAN ANTONIO AND COMANCHES IN THE PLAZA—TAMALES—A LOAD OF WOOD WITH A BURRO UNDER IT—THE RIDING MATCH BETWEEN THE RANGERS, COMANCHES AND RANCHEROS.

Passing over a high rolilng country, very similar to that we had seen the day before, and fording a little stream on the way called the Cibolo, where there was no water, about noon we came to the Salado creek, some five or six miles from the city of San Antonio. Here we halted for an hour or so under the shade of some cottonwood trees, to rest and graze the horses. Mounting again, we proceeded on our way, and after going several miles we came to the top of a pretty high ridge, from which we had a fine view of the ancient city of San Antonio, spread out in the valley below us. A little while afterwards we struck a large, well beaten road, which we followed until we reached the suburbs of the city, where we halted near the Alamo, under some cotton wood trees. As there was no grass in the vicinity, Cudjo was sent into town across the river for a supply of forage, and all of us, except Uncle Seth and Mr. Pitt, (who had been to San Antonio before) and volunteered to keep camp, walked off to the city to "see the sights."

At that time there were but few Americans in the place, and as all the houses were built in the Spanish or Morisco style, it presented a novel appearance to us. Mixed up with these buildings, which were of stone or adobe, were numerous jacals or huts, occupied by the poorer classes, constructed of poles planted perpendicularly in the ground, plastered with mud, and roofed with tule, or the long leaves of an aquatic plant, somewhat like the bulrush.

On our way we stopped at the Alamo, whose weather-stained and battered walls had been plainly visible from our encampment—those walls which a short time previously had been so gallantly defended by Travis, Bowie, Crockett and a few kindred spirits, against the overwhelming forces of Santa Anna. Here, for ten days or more, this little band of patriots kept at bay the whole Mexican army, numbering several thousand, till at last the few suruivors of the protracted conflict, worn down by fatigue and the want of sleep were no longer able to defend the walls that had been breached in many places by the continuous fire of the Mexican artillery. The Alamo was stormed, and the few who were left to maintain the unequal struggle were put to the sword. As some one has truly said: "Thermopylæ had its messenger of defeat—not one escaped from the Alamo to bear the tidings of its fall." Within the walls, we were shown the spot where the body of the famous old hunter Crockett was found, surrounded by those of half a dozen Mexican soldiers he had sent before him into the "happy hunting grounds. We were also shown a small room, in which, we were told, Bowie had defended himself to the last, whilst confined to his bed by a wound. Splotches of his blood still stained the wall. The citizens of San Antonio may point with commendable pride to her palatial residences and her splendid public buildings, but the first question asked by the stranger within her gates is, "where is the Alamo?"

From the Alamo, we turned our steps to the bridge that spanned the clear waters of the San Antonio river, and crossing over, we inspected everything worth seeing in the city, which, with the exception of the Alamo and a few adjoining jacals, was situated on the western side. The old church on the west side of the plaza, was especially an object of interest to us, its turrets, belfrys and massive, sombre walls, reminding us of the days of the Inquisition. On another side of the plaza we were shown a building in which, not long after the occupation of San Antonio by the Americans, a desparate fight took place, between a number of Comanche warriors and the citizens of the town. At that time, the Texans and Comanches were upon friendly terms *theoretically* but not practically, and a party of the latter had come into the city, ostensibly for the purpose of making a treaty with their white brethren—which of course they intended to break whenever it suited their convenience. It was known they had a number of white prisoners among them, and after the warriors had been induced to enter the building mentioned, for the purpose of holding a "palaver" with the citizens, some one suggested that they should be seized and kept in confinement until their prisoners were delivered up. This was finally determined upon, and after some little talk, and a company of armed men had surrounded the house, the interpreter was requested to tell the Comanches that they were prisoners, and would be held as such until the whites they had captured were brought in. But a Comanche warrior, like Gen. Taylor, "never surrenders," and the moment the interpreter gave them to understand they were prisoners, they responded with the war-whoop, and began to pour their arrows into every white man in the room. A bloody struggle ensued, the whites outside shooting through the doors and windows. At length the Indians made a sortie, and forced their way through the men surrounding the house, but soon finding themselves hard pressed, they retreated into an unoccupied house on the corner of the plaza. From thence they kept the whites at bay for some time, and several were killed; but at length some one succeeded in setting fire to the roof of the house, and the smoke and flames drove the few survivors out, and they were all shot down, except one warrior, who sprang upon a horse some one had hitched near by, and made his escape into the prairie west of town. A war between the Texans and Comanches was the result of this bloody fray, and many a scalp, was torn from the heads of lone wanderers on the prairie, in revenge for the slaughter of the "braves" in the plaza of San Antonio. Recrossing the bridge, we went back to camp and got there just as Cudjo had prepared a tempting supper, at which we all played a trenchant knife without the fork.

The night passed of quietly, and the next morning after breakfast, leaving Cudjo to take care of camp, we mounted our horses and set out to to visit the old missions of San Jose and Concepcion, a short distance from the city. These missions were established by the Spaniards more than a hundred and fifty years ago, for the purpose ostensibly, of civilizing the Indians, and possibly the Rev. Padres may have had an eye also to their temporal subjugation. But, however that may be, there is no doubt that the Spanish missionaries were eminently successful in propitiating the native tribes and in converting them to the true faith. They induced many of them to abandon their wandering, predatory life, and settling around these missions, they turned their attention to the cultivation of the soil under the supervision of the padres, who in recompense for the gratuitous labor they performed taught them to pray to saints and make the sign of the cross. In looking at these old missions we spent the day very pleasantly, and the sun was just setting when we started back to camp. Passing by the old mission of San Jose, our ears were saluted by a sound very similar to that of a heavy wind. We could not imagine at first what caused it, for there was not a cloud to be seen, but looking towards the old mission, we discovered it was produced by the wings of myriads of bats, that were passing out in continuous streams from every door and window in the building. It seemed to me that all the bats for twenty miles around must have congregated at the old mission, for they continued to pour out apparently without any diminution of their numbers, as long as we remained there. Willie dismounted, and amused himself for some moments by throwing stones at the living stream passing out of one of the windows, knocking down two or three every time.

By the light of the full-moon, which made her appearance soon after sunset, we galloped back to camp, which we "winded" some distance before we came to it, by the smell of fat beef steak and onions, which Cudjo was frying for supper. At supper, a platter filled apparently with rolls of corn shucks, was placed before us by Cudjo. "Look here, Cudjo," said Lawrence, eyeing the strange dish suspiciously, "havn't you made a mistake and given us some of the 'roughness' intended for the horses?" "Oh, no, Mass Lawrence," said Cudjo, "dem's what de Mexicans call termarlers; I eat some ob dem in town wen I go dar to buy corn, and dey's fust rate." On trying them we found that Cudjo had spoken truly when he said they was "fust rate." I give the receipt for making tamales, as I have never seen it in any of the cookery books, viz: "A quantity of fresh beef, venison or mutton is hashed very fine; this is seasoned with salt, red pepper and garlic (or onions) and then mixed thoroughly with an equal quantity of hominy beaten or ground to a paste. The mixture is then made into rolls like small sausages and each wrapped in the inner shucks of corn husks, and boiled till done. They are brought to the table smoking hot and the shucks are peeled off as they are eaten. I have often "worried them down" since, without being fatigued, and I can recommend them as an excellent dish.

It was our intention to leave San Antonio the next morning, but we heard that a great "riding match" was to come off the next day, between some rangers and rancheros and a party of forty or fifty Comanche warriors, who had come in for the purpose of making another treaty—to be broken the first time they had a chance to "lift the hair" from some fellow's head, or steal a herd of horses. We had often heard of the astonishing equestrian feats performed by the Texas Rangers, rancheros and Comanches, and we were anxious to see the "riding match" between them. Uncle Seth told us, they could beat the circus riders "all hollow," and that the sight would be worth the loss of a day. We determined therefore to remain another day at San Antonio and see the "show."

The next morning we found the whole population of the city, men, women and children, all preparing to leave for the scene of the great riding match, which was to take place in the prairie (now grown up in mesquite and chapparal) just west of the San Pedro creek. Gaily dressed "caballeros" were prancing along the streets on their gaudily caparisoned steeds; rangers mounted on their horses, and dressed in buckskin hunting shirts, leggins and slouched hats, and with pistols and bowie knives stuck in their belts, galloped here and there among the crowd, occasionally charging "horse and any" into some bar-room or grocery, for a glass of "mescal" or "scorch gullet." All the strangers in the place, and all the citizens with their families crammed into all kinds of vehicles, were hurrying in hot haste, to reach the scene of action before the match began.

Mounting our horses, and leaving Uncle Seth in charge of camp, who declined going, as he said "he had seen Injins often enough cuttin' up their didoes on horseback," we followed the crowd until we came to the San Pedro, a little stream flowing through the western suburbs of the city. But just there an incident occurred, that no doubt afforded a good deal of amusement to the lookers on, and which prevented us from reaching our destination as soon as we expected by half an hour. A Mexican came meeting us, mounted on the hips of a burro, that was so completely covered with mesquite branches nothing of the animal was visible except its ears and the lower portions of its legs. The moment our horses caught sight of this strange looking object, they stopped and stood for an instant as if rooted to the spot; then snorting like mustangs, they suddenly wheeled about, and went clattering down the street the way we had come. So badly were they stampeded, we were unable to check their headlong course until we had crossed the bridge and got back to camp on the east side of the river.

Uncle Seth, who was sitting on a log outside the tent, lovingly rubbing up his old flint and steel rifle, said as we came near, "Why, boys, you soon got tired of the show—anything the matter?" "Oh, nothing much," said Lawrence, who was the first one to check his horse, "we met a load of mesquite brush on the way with a burro under it, and our horses brought us back to camp whether we would or no." Uncle Seth laughed heartily at our mishap. "But," said he, "I s'pose you'll try it over agin?" "Of course we will," replied Lawrence, "but if we meet another burro on the road, you may look for us to be back again in a few minutes." However, we encountered no more burros, and soon reached the locality where the riding match was to be held, and where we found nearly all the people of the town already assembled. It was indeed a strange and novel scene that presented itself to our view. Drawn up in line on one side of the arena, and sitting like statues upon their horses, were the Comanche warriors, decked out in their savage finery of paints, feathers and beads, and looking with Indian stoicism upon all that was going on around them. Opposite to them, drawn up in single file also, were their old enemies upon many a bloody field, the Texas Rangers, and a few Mexican rancheros, dressed in their steeple crown, broad brim sombreros, showy scarfs and "slashed" trowsers, holding gracefully in check, the fiery mustangs on which they were mounted. After some preliminaries, the space selected for the riding was cleared of all non-contestants and the show began. A Mexican lad mounted on a paint (piebald) pony, with a spear in his hand, cantered off a couple of hundred yards, and laid the spear flat on the ground. Immediately a Comanche brave started forth from their line, and plunging his spurs into his horse's flanks, dashed off in a direction opposite to that where the the spear was lying, for a hundred yards or so; then wheeling suddenly he came rushing back at full speed, and as he passed the spot where the spear had been placed, without checking his horse for an instant, he swerved from his saddle, seized the spear, and rising gracefully in his seat, continued his headlong course for some distance beyond, when he wheeled again and galloped back (dropping the spear as he returned at the same spot from which he had taken it) and resumed his place in the ranks. The same feat was then performed by a dozen or so each of the rangers, rancheros and Indians, which was about the number of the actual contestants for the prizes. A glove was then substituted in place of the spear, and in like manner it was picked up from the ground by the riders, whilst going at at full speed, and without checking their horses for an instant, with one exception, caused by the stumbling of the horse just before he reached the spot where the glove was lying. A board with a "bull's eye" marked upon it, was then set up at the point where the spear and glove had been placed. A warrior with his bow in his hand, and three or four arrows from his quiver, charged full speed towards the mark, and in the little time he was passing it, planted two arrows in the board. The rangers and rancheros then took there turn, using their pistols instead of bows, and all of them struck the board as they passed it, and several the bull's eye. A good many other extraordinary feats were performed, such as hanging by one leg to the horn of the saddle, in such a way that the rider could not be seen by those he was supposed to be charging, and whilst in that position, discharging pistols or shooting arrows at an imaginary foe under the horse's neck; jumping from the horse when at a gallop, running a few steps by his side, and springing into the saddle again without checking him for a moment; passing under the horse's neck, and coming up into the saddle again from the opposite side, etc.—all performed while the horse was running. No feats of horsemanship we had ever seen exhibited by the most famous "knights of the ring," could compare with them for daring and dexterity.

The last and most interesting and exciting performance of all was the "breaking in" of several "wild steeds of the desert" that had never been backed by man, as they had been recently captured. These were tied "short up" to stakes firmly planted in the ground. Young McMullen, one of the rangers, who had already been voted by general acclamation the most daring and graceful rider on the ground, was the first to perform this dangerous feat. Approaching cautiously the most perfectly formed and powerful of these unbroken steeds, he at length succeeded in spite of the furious struggles of the terrified animal, in slipping a blind of thick cloth over its eyes, and instantly as if transfixed by the wand of an enchanter, the horse ceased struggling, and stood perfectly still. McMullen then forced the bit in his mouth, girted the saddle securely upon him, and placing his foot in the stirrup, sprang upon his back. All this time the horse never moved, but the quivering of its well-formed, muscular limbs, showed that its terrors were still unabated. McMullen fixed himself firmly in his seat, and grasping the reins with his left hand, he leaned forward and quickly drew off the blind he had placed over the horse's eyes. The instant it was drawn up, the wild horse snorting and absolutely screaming in its rage and terror, gave one tremendous bound, and then darted off at headlong speed across the prairie; but instead of trying to check him, McMullen urged him on with whip and spurs until he had gone perhaps a mile, when he reined him round and brought him back within fifty yards of the point he had started from. Here, suddenly coming to a halt, the horse began to "pitch" or plunge in such a violent manner that none but the most perfect rider could possibly have kept his seat in the saddle. But McMullen stuck to him as if he had been part of the animal itself, and the horse in vain attempted in this way to get rid of his unwelcome burden. At length, frantic with rage and fright, the horse reared straight up, and threw himself backwards upon the ground. A cry of horror broke from the lips of the spectators, for every one supposed that McMullen would be crushed to death beneath the weight of his steed; but he was on the "qui vive" and sprang from under him just in time to save himself, and the moment the horse rose to his feet, we saw him seated again in the saddle, as calm and composed as though he were bestriding the gentlest hack that ever bore a country curate to his church. Again the horse darted off at the top of his speed, and again McMullen urged him on as he did before, with quirt and spurs, for more than a mile, when we saw him turn and coming back towards us. In a few moments he came galloping up and after cantering slowly around the arena, he drew up his panting and foaming steed at the place he had started from, and the black eyes of many a "senorita" glanced admiringly towards the daring and handsome young ranger. The "wild steed of the desert" had been effectually subdued. Several more were "broken in" by Indians and Mexicans, but a description of the feat would be merely a repitition of what has been said. At the conclusion, the distribution of prizes took place, consisting of handsomely mounted pistols, bowie-knives, spanish blankets, etc. The first prize was awarded by the judges to McMullen. The second to Long Quirt, a

Comanche warrior; the third to H. L. Kinney, of Corpus Christi, and the fourth to Senor Don Rafael, a ranchero from the Rio Grande. Presents of various kinds were then distributed among the Comanches, which ended the "show," and we returned to camp, well pleased with all we had seen.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. PITT COURTS THE MUSES AND IS "KICKED" SKY HIGH—"THE LONE STAR OF TEXAS"—THE HYMN OF THE ALAMO—LEAVE THE CITY—GREAT NUMBERS OF DEER IN THE VICINITY—FOSSIL SHELLS—UNCLE SETH'S THEORY TO ACCOUNT FOR THEM, AND CUDJO'S—A MULE THE BEST SENTRY—TURKEY STEAKS—A FALSE ALARM.

As the day was pretty well advanced by the time we got back to camp, we concluded not to leave the city until the next morning, particularly as we wished to purchase some things we needed, which we knew we could not get in the wilderness beyond. Soon after our return to camp, Mr. Pitt took a pencil and a sheet of paper, went off a little way and seated himself at the foot of a cotton wood tree, from whence he had an unobstructed view of the "weather-stained walls of the Alamo." I knew he was occasionally a devotee at the shrine of the muses, in a diffident kind of way, and as soon as I saw him begin to roll up the white of his eyes, and pull at the hair on the top of his head, I felt sure the "fit" was on him then. It seemed, however, he had a good deal of coaxing to do on that occasion, before he could induce the coy muses to listen to his supplications, but in about an hour his "paroxysms" subsided, and folding up the paper, he started for camp. Before he came within hearing, I said to Willie: "Mr. Pitt, I know, has been writing poetry, and you must ask him to let you see it." "All right," said Willie, "I'll do it." "Mr. Pitt," said Willie, when he came up, what have you been writing under that tree out yonder?—a love letter to your sweet heart?" "No," replied Mr. Pitt, "I have no correspondence of that sort on hand now." "Well, what is it?" persisted Willie. "Nothing but a few lines of doggerel," modestly answered Mr. Pitt. "Please let me see 'em," said Willie, "I'm mighty fond of poetry. I have read every bit of Mother Goose's Melodies and the Western Songster and I havn't had half enough yet." "Well, if that be the case," said Mr. Pitt (evidently nothing loth to produce the doggerel) "I suppose I'll have to let you read them," and he handed the paper to Willie. "Read them out," said Lawrence, "we all want to hear them, if Mr. Pitt has no objections." Mr. Pitt didn't object, and Willie read aloud the following lines:

"THE LONE STAR OF TEXAS.

When the Lone Star arose o'er the wilds of the west,
  Faint and dimly it shone from its orbit on high,
For the Mexican eagle had flown from its nest,
  And his broad dusky form overshadowed the sky.

As the horde's of Santa Anna advanced to the fight,
  And up to heaven their battle cries pealed,
Oh, paler that star grew, I ween, for its light
  Was eclipsed by the glitter of helmet and shield.

Where bravely still struggled a small Spartan band
  Who had sworn for their country to conquer or die,
Where the weather-stained walls of the Alamo stand
  The Lone Star still shone from its home in the sky.

How that band firmly stood through the perilous fight,
  How they died for their country—let history tell,

But the Lone Star went out; like a meteor at night,
When Travis, the Texan Leonidas fell.

Where the Tyrant dismayed from the battle-field fled
Where the blood of his myrmidons crimsoned the plain—
O'er the field of Jacinto strewn thick with his dead,
More brilliant than ever, that star rose again.

And now in the flag of our Union that star,
In a bright constellation unceasingly glows,
And oft will it shine through the dark clouds of war,
As a beacon to friends and a terror to foes.

When Willie had finished reading the verses, there was a dead silence for a moment—not a plaudit or a word of praise from any one, except Cudjo, who signified his approval by remarking "Ef dat hime only had a good chune to it, it would do mity well fur ole Mass Rivers' 'sam book. Mr. Pitt was considerably disconcerted by the cool reception we gave to his verses. He evidently had expected a little applause when Willie had finished reading them, and he could not conceal the disappointment occasioned by our ominous silence, for he said almost angrily to Willie, "give me back that paper, and I won't be such a fool as to throw pearls before swine another time." "Now see here, Mr. Pitt," said I, "don't 'fly off the handle' because we don't go into ecstacies over your verses, and don't consider you quite as great a poet as Lord Byron. They are very passable doggerel, and that is all can be said in their favor." "I never claimed they were anything else," indignantly replied Mr. Pitt. "Never mind, Mr. Pitt," said Willie, who was anxious throw oil on the troubled waters, "never mind what Mr. Dobell says, for I think your verses are just as good as some I've seen published in the papers." "Good Heavens! Willie," said Mr. Pitt laughing, "and do you really think my verses are as good as some you've seen in the papers? Well, I have heard of 'damning authors with faint-praise,' but this caps the climax. I don't think I shall ever have the heart to attempt doggerel again; but I have no doubt," added Mr. Pitt, "that some poet worthy of the theme, will yet arise to do it justice. Mr. Pitt's words were prophetical, for the "Hymn of the Alamo," written by R. M. Potter, which I here subjoin, undoubtedly has the ring of the true metal:

"Rise, man the wall—our clarion's blast
  Now sounds its final reveille,
This dawning morn must be the last
  Our fated band shall ever see.
To life, but not to hope—farewell—
  Yon trumpet's clang and cannon's peal
  And storming shout and clash of steel
Are ours—but not our country's knell—
  Welcome the Spartan's death.
  'Tis no despairing strife;
We fall—we die—but our expiring breath,
  Is Freedom's breath of life.
Here on this new Thermopylæ,
  Our monument shall tower on high,
And "Alamo" hereafter be
  On bloodier fields the battle cry.
Thus Travis from the rampart cried,
  And when his warriors saw the foe
  Like 'whelming billows roll below,
At once each dauntless heart replied:
  "Welcome the Spartan's death.
We fall—we die—but our expiring breath
  Is Freedom's breath of life."
They come—like autumn's leaves they fall;
  Yet hordes on hordes they onward rush,
With gory tramp they mount the wall,

Till numbers the defenders crush;
Till falls their flag when none remain!
Well may the ruffians quake to tell
How Travis and his hundred fell,
Amid a thousand foemen slain!
They died the Spartan's death,
But not in hopeless strife;
Like brothers died; and their expiring breath
Was Freedom's breath of life.

Having completed our "outfit" by the purchase of such articles as we needed, we left San Antonio early in the morning, taking a road running westward to a little village called Castroville on the Medina river, lately settled by some French people. At that day, nearly all the country between San Antonio and Castroville was a beautiful, smooth prairie, with here and there a fringe of timber along the water courses, and it was a favorite resort for deer, antelope and other game. When only five or six miles from the city, at Willie's suggestion, we halted for a few moments, and counted the number of herds of deer in sight. There were thirteen herds, and allowing a hundred deer to the herd (which we thought was a fair estimate) there were more than a thousand deer visible from the place where we sat on our horses. At this day, a deer is rarely seen in that section of country—so rapidly does the game disappear in a prairie country before the advancing line of settlements. Continuing our route, about three o'clock we came to a creek, the name of which I have forgotten, where Uncle Seth thought it advisable to camp for the night. Selecting a secure place for our encampment, surrounded on three sides by thick chapparal, we posted Willie as our sentinel on the open side, and the rest of us went to work to pitch the tent and collect fuel enough to last us till morning.

We had now fairly entered the Indian range, although we were still within the settlements, and Uncle Seth enjoined upon us the necessity of keeping up from this time, a regular watch, even when halting for only an hour or so during the day. Guard duty, therefore, came quite heavy on such a small party as ours, but as Uncle Seth had told us we would run a great risk of losing our horses, if not our scalps whenever we neglected to put out a guard, we submitted to the onerous duty without a murmur. When Willie's two hours watch had expired, he came into camp, bringing with him three or four very large oyster shells, which he had picked up near his stand. They were the shells of an extinct species of oyster—at least none precisely similar are now found in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico. "How do you suppose," said Willie, as he threw the shells down by the fire, "that these bivalves were brought so far into the country? It must be at least one hundred and sixty miles from here to the nearest point on the gulf." Mr. Pitt, who made some pretensions to scientific knowledge, said that these shells were found in many parts of Texas, and upon the tops of the highest hills, and that it was evident wherever they were found, the country had been at a comparatively recent geological period, submerged by the waters of the sea. Uncle Seth, however, dissented from this theory. He said that "he believed them shells was jist tuck up, like the frogs and fishes, by waterspouts, and then rained down agin at times, over the face of the yearth." Mr. Pitt smiled superciliously at this unscientific way of accounting for the phenomenon, but by this time he was too well disciplined to dispute the opinion of the commander-in-chief; turning to Cudjo, he said, "How do you suppose, Cudjo, that these oyster shells came there?" "Good laws! Mass Pitt, how you tink dis nigger know anyting 'bout dat? Maybe so dey's a sort ob highland ister, and de Injin done eat 'em all up and leff de shell; but," added Cudjo, giving a toss to the last flapjack he was cooking, "supper's ready, gemmen," and the subject of fossils was dropped for the time being.

After supper, Uncle Seth told Cudjo to stake the pack mule on the open side of our encampment, because, as he said, the mule would be sure to let us know if the Indians should attempt to approach us from that direction. "A mule," said Uncle Seth, "is always on the lookout, and is the best guard I knows of 'ceptin' a horse that's been onct stole by the Injins—they never gits over their dread of 'em, I s'pose becase they ride 'em so hard and treat 'em so cruel, an' ef one comes around at night they's sure to sing out." However, the night passed off quietly, and nothing occurred to disturb our slumbers.

About daylight the next morning, we were aroused by the gobbling of turkeys that were roosting in a grove about three hundred yards form camp. Willie jumped up, seized his gun and hurried off in the direction of the roost. In a few moments we heard him fire, and soon afterwards we saw him coming back with a large gobbler slung across his shoulders. As we could not carry it with us, Uncle Seth stripped the feathers from its breast, from which he sliced off steaks enough for breakfast, and upon trial we unanimously decided they were superior in delicacy and flavor to venison steaks.

Saddling up after breakfast, we were soon again on our way, which led us through a beautiful undulating country until we came to a little stream, which, as well as I remember, Uncle Seth said the Mexicans called the Seco, or dry creek, certainly a very appropriate name, as there was not a drop of water in it. Crossing this, we continued on to another stream in which there was a little water, where Uncle Seth thought it best to call a halt and graze our animals for an hour or so. Leaving the road, we went about half a mile above to where there was a grove of elms, near the margin of the creek, under the shade of which we unsaddled and staked our horses upon the luxuriant grass in the vicinity.

However, we had scarcely seated ourselves comfortably on the green sward, when we heard the most distressing cries and screams in the direction of the road we had just left. We were on the qui vive instantly, and Uncle Seth, after listening attentively for a moment sprung to his feet, and seizing his gun, exclaimed: "Boys, the blasted Injins are killing some folks on the road, shore, and we must try and save 'em." Suiting the action to the word, Uncle Seth started off at a run, and snatching up our guns, we followed after him on foot, as there was no time to saddle and mount our horses. Urged on by the distressing cries that grew louder and louder as we neared the road, we exerted ourselves to the utmost, and rapidly approached the spot where the supposed Indians were killing and scalping their helpless victims. But between us and the road there was a slight elevation that as yet concealed from view the dreadful scene that was being enacted upon it. Lawrence, who was the best runner of the party, gained the top of this elevation some distance ahead of us, and we were astonished to see him suddenly halt, and laugh heartily at something he saw. We wondered much at this singular proceeding, but as we came up one by one, puffing and panting, to the place where he was, from which a view of the road could be had, the mystery was explained.

Slowly winding their way along the road, were about a dozen Mexican "carretas" or carts, from the axles of which proceeded those "heart rending cries of distress"—for grease! Any one who has ever heard the dismal sounds made by the huge wooden wheels of these clumsy vehicles when in motion, can readily imagine how natural it was under the circumstances that we should have mistaken them for the cries of people in distress. We all laughed heartily at the way we had been fooled—except Uncle Seth, who didn't seem to appreciate the joke at all. He was evidently greatly "put out" by the fact that an old experienced woodsman and Indian fighter like himself should have been taken in and done for in this ridiculous manner. "Well, I declar, boys," said he, "ef this don't beat all natur. I haven't run as fur ner as fast sence the Injins chased me and Dan Sturgis on the head of York's creek. I thought certin it was women and children that was screechin' so; and all the time 'twant nothing but these dratted carretas. Ef the Injins would only bounce the blasted yaller cusses that's drivin' 'em, I could stand right here and see 'em lift the last har on their heads with the greatest of pleasure. I wouldn't crook my finger to save the whole lay out. It's too bad, drat if it ain't." And so saying, Uncle Seth turned about with a look of supreme disgust, and made tracks for camp. We all followed him, considerably crestfallen at the unexpected termination of our chivalrous attempt to succor the distressed. "Mr. Dobell," said Willie to me, "as Uncle Seth says, 'don't this beat all natur.' There never was a set of fellows so badly fooled as we have been. Why, I saw them Mexican chaps laughing at us when we came running to the top of the ridge. They knew well enough what brought us there." "Yes," said I, "Willie, we have been taken in ridiculously this time, it can't be denied, and I reckon it will be best to say nothing about our scrimmage with the carretas when we get home." No allusion was afterward made to it except on one occasion, when Willie demurely asked Uncle Seth if we hadn't better go to the relief of a gang of cayotes that were "screechin'" in the distance; to which impertinent question Uncle Seth disdained to reply. It was evidently a sore subject with him.

After dinner, we returned to the road and continued our route through a beautiful rolling country, until we came to the Medina river, opposite the little town of Castroville, where we pitched camp, about two hundred yards above the road, near a cold spring that burst out of the bank only a foot or so above the surface of the river. As there was but little danger of being attacked by Indians so near town, Uncle Seth relieved us from guard duty, and we all got a good night's rest, with the exception of Cudjo, who going to sleep as usual with his head to the fire, a chunk rolled down against it and burnt him severely. Henry told him it served him right for not sleeping with his feet to the fire instead of his head, but this had no effect on Cudjo, who still persisted in baking his cranium every night. Willie suggested that perhaps the negro's wool had originally been caused by this peculiar habit of the race, their hair being kept thereby, as it were, continually in a crisped or singed condition—which is at least as rational a way of accounting for the "wool on the cocoanut" as the climatic theory.

All hands, as usual, were 'roused at daylight the next morning, and as soon as breakfast was despatched, we mounted our horses and turned our faces again towards the far west. Crossing the river at the ford just opposite town, and passing through the business portion consisting of a grocery and blacksmith shop and then the suburbs—a shanty or so and two or three sheep pens or corrals, we boldly struck out into the uninhabited wilderness beyond. As we advanced, we found the character of the country somewhat different from that we had passed over between San Antonio and Castroville—more broken and rocky and but little timber—the main growth consisting of chapparal bushes and the prickly pear or cactus, the latter in many places as high as a man on horseback. They are a very ungainly looking vegetable production, and yet they are not without their redeeming *points.* Their broad pulpy leaves, when singed over a blazing fire, to deprive them of thorns, are very nutricious food for stock, and as they are full of juice, animals, when fed upon them, can travel a long time without water. The cactus bears an oblong fruit, about the size and shape of the fig, which has a very enticing appearance, but which, I have heard, is very unwholesome, and in fact, I have known of one instance myself, in which death resulted from eating freely of the fruit. It is a singular thing, however, that the thorns of the cactus when imbedded in the flesh do not produce inflammation, and that they often penetrate the most vital parts of animals, apparently without any bad effects. I have seen beeves killed on the Rio Grande, which had been fed on cactus, and which were as fat as a "stalled ox," although many of the thorns were embedded in their livers and lungs.

CHAPTER VII.

INDIAN SIGN—DODELL ENCOUNTERS A MEXICAN LION—THE "STAMPEDE"—CUDJO DISAPPEARS IN THE ROW, BUT TURNS UP UNEXPECTEDLY—CUTTING THE BEE TREES—CUDJO GETS BADLY STUNG, ETC.

To-day we crossed a considerable trail, quite fresh, and we followed it some distance to ascertain whether it had been made by Indians or by mustangs. Uncle Seth not satisfying himself as to its character until we came to a low, branching live oak tree growing near the trail. Here he called our attention to the fact that the trail diverged around the branches of this tree, which settled the question as to whether it had been made by Indians or mustangs. "You see, boys," said Uncle Seth, "I was purty shore it was Injin sign from the start, fur the trail didn't hardly scatter enough fur mustangs, but now I'm certin of it, becase the tracks are all outside the limbs of this tree. Ef they was mustangs some on 'em would have gone under 'em, for you see they are high enough for a horse to pass, ef there wase't a rider on him. There's twenty-five in the party," continued Uncle Seth, and they've got five pack animules along with 'em." "Why, Uncle Seth," said Henry, "how can you tell that?" "Easy enuff," said he, "Look at the trail here, where five pack animules and one horse have branched off from it. Now, Injins generally travel in single file, one right arter the other, but the pack animules sometimes leave the trail, bein' loose, and are fust on one side and then the other. We must keep our eyes skinned now, boys," said Uncle Seth, "fur there's no tellin' when we may come across a party of Injins."

We continued on our course without halting until we came to a little stream called the Hondo, where we pitched camp under the shelter of some live oaks that grew a short distance from the creek. The sun was still several hours high, and after stationing Mr. Pitt on the most elevated ground in the vicinity as a lookout, Uncle Seth detailed me to go down the creek and kill a "ven'son" for supper, whilst he went up it to hunt for bee trees, as the timber was more abundant in that direction. The rest of the party were ordered to keep a strict watch upon the horses, and not to leave camp until we returned. The country in the vicinity was principally prairie, interspersed with numerous patches of chapparal, and a narrow belt of low timber bordered the creek on both sides, by which its course could be traced for several miles above and below the point where we had encamped.

Thinking that I would stand a better chance to get a deer by keeping close to the timber along the creek, I followed it down, turning with all its meanderings, until I supposed I had gone at least a mile from camp, though in a direct line, it was probably not more than half that distance. As I have frequently observed it to be the case when meat is wanted, game of all kinds seemed unusually scarce, and so far I had seen nothing larger than a chapparal cock. At length, feeling a little tired, I took a seat at the root of a tree to rest a few moments; and besides, I had learned from experience that often the most successful way of finding game was keeping still, appropriately called "still hunting." Being motionless yourself, you do not attract the attention of game, and at the same time everything in motion and every sound attracts yours.

I had been thus seated perhaps ten or fifteen minutes when the snapping of a twig drew my eyes in the direction of a thick bunch of chapparal to my left, and to my astonishment I saw a very large Mexican lion creeping stealthily towards me. I rose up immediately, cocked my rifle and presented it at him, and the same instant the lion, seeing I had discovered him, suddenly stopped, and giving a low growl, commenced lashing his sides with his tail, and doubling his feet under him just as a cat does when about to spring on a mouse. I saw there was no time to lose, and taking as steady aim as I could (for I must confess that I was considerably "flustrated," as Uncle Seth would say), I fired at his breast. At the report of the gun he gave a terrific howl and sprang towards me. My hair stood straight up on my head, and for a moment (supposing I had missed him) I thought I was gone, but to my astonishment as well as relief, he stopped when in a few feet of me, and, crouching down, began to lick the blood that flowed from a wound, which had been made by the bullet exactly where I had aimed. Now, I thought, was the time to beat a hasty retreat from the dangerous proximity of this ferocious beast, but the instant I made a motion to rise from my seat at the foot of the tree, the lion growled savagely and glared at me in such a way out of his fierce red eyes as gave me plainly to understand if I didn't keep still he would make an end of me in short order. I took the hint, leaned back against the tree, and kept perfectly quiet. The lion all the time continued to keep his fierce fiery eyes fixed steadily upon me, and whenever I made the slightest movement he would growl and show his white teeth in the most threatening manner. Finding he was bent on keeping me a prisoner, I thought I would cautiously reload my gun and give him another shot, but the moment I attempted to draw the ramrod, he growled more savagely than ever, and began to beat the ground with his tail. And there I sat, not daring to move a finger, it seemed to me for more than an hour, with this ferocious beast in a few feet of me, glaring at me with his fiery eyes, and growling and lashing the ground with his tail, whenever I made the least motion. What to do, I knew not, and yet I felt sure if I remained where I was until dark that I would be torn to pieces by the lion. The perspiration broke out in large drops upon my forehead as I saw the waning light of day giving place to the shadows of night, and I had almost despaired of effecting my escape, when I heard a faint halloo in the distance, and in a little while, to my inexpressible relief, I saw the "Explorers," with Uncle Seth in the lead, coming in the direction of the spot where I had been kept so long in "durance vile." As soon as the lion saw them, he got up slowly, gave me a parting growl, and limped off towards the thickest part of the woods. I drew a long breath of relief as he disappeared from view, and just then Willie, who was in advance of the others, discovered me and shouted out, "Here he is boys, we have found him at last!" In a moment the whole party were around me making eager inquiries as to what had happened, and what had kept me so long away from camp. "Why, Mr. Dobell," said Willie, "we thought you had certainly been kidnapped by the Indians, or else some "varmint" had made his supper on you, and here we find you sitting comfortably at the foot of a tree enjoying your 'otium cum dignitate,' as Mr. Pitt calls it.

"Yes," said Uncle Seth, "you gin us all a purty good scare, certin, fur when we heard you shoot, and the sun went down and still you didn't come, we made shore that something was wrong. I shall have to put you on double duty to-night, fur kickin' up sich a row in camp." "All right, Uncle Seth," said I, "I will do double duty without grumbling, since you came up just in time to save me from a Mexican lion that was about to gobble me down without salt or pepper," and then I told him how I had shot the lion, and how he had stood guard over me and kept me a prisouer until they rode up. "Well, well," said Uncle Seth, "you was in a purty clost place, and it war lucky you kept still. I knows the ways of them varmints, and ef you had riz and tried to back off, he'd a bounced you shore. But do you think you hit him hard?" "Yes," said I, "the bullet struck him about the center of the breast, for I saw the blood running from the wound." "Then," said Uncle Seth, "we'll have him in the morning, fur I kin trail him by the blood." I mounted behind Willie on his pony, and we all rode back to camp, where we arrived just as Cudjo was preparing to dish up supper.

Uncle Seth had found two bee trees within a short distance of camp, and it was determined that we would remain where we were the next day for the purpose of cutting them, and hunting the Mexican lion I had wounded. "If we can trail him up and get him," said Willie, "I shall claim the hide for my share, for you know I was the first to find Mr. Dobell." Cudjo spoke for the liver, the oil from which, he said, would cure the worstest sort of rumatiz. "Cudjo," said I, "what would you have done if you had been in my place, with that lion in a few feet of you, growling and showing his white teeth whenever you crooked your finger?" "I dunno, Mass Jack," said he, "but I tink I be so bad scared I couldn't crook a finger ef I wanted to ever so much. Bress de Lord, I spec you fine dis nigger dead as a hammer; but you bet I ain't gwine fur from dis camp. Ef dem Mexican lion ebber catch Cudjo dey'll hab to come to de house for 'im."

"Boys," said Mr. Pitt, "Cudjo has been trying to trade me out of my Mexican blanket ever since we started on this trip, and I'll tell you now what I'm willing to do. If Cudjo will go out one hundred yards from camp, and blaze a tree and take us to it in the morning, I'll give him the blanket for nothing." "Oh, shucks!" said Cudjo, coiling himself up in his own blanket close to the fire, "I ain't gwine to temp de Lord in no sich a way. I won't want dat blanket, nohow, tell next winter." "If you'll go, Cudjo," said Willie, "I'll give you my three-bladed knife." "And I," said Lawrence, "will give him a plug of first rate tobacco." "And I will give him a brand new pipe to smoke it in," said I. Cudjo was evidently sorely tempted by the promise of so many valuable presents, to take the risk of being devoured by the Mexican lion, for he raised himself on his elbow and gazed wistfully into the darkness outside, but laying himself down again, he drew his blanket over his head, and muttered beneath its folds: "No, I ain't gwine nohow, case I promis Mass Rivers fore I leff home dat I'd stay clost to camp, an ef I go out in dem woods an git chawed up wid Mass Jack's Mexican lion, he'll tink I ain't to be pended on. 'Spose I go out dar an de lion eat me up, who's gwine to pay Mass Rivers fur dis nigger, hey? Jess tell me dat." No one proffered to give the desired information on this point, and in five minutes Cudjo was fast asleep with his head, as usual, in good roasting distance of the fire.

First one and then another followed his example, all except the head roasting process, and soon every one in camp was sound asleep except myself and Henry, who was on guard. I suppose my recent scrape with the lion had left my nerves in an excitable condition—at any rate, hour after hour went by and I still lay wide awake listening to the various sounds that were borne to my ears from forest and plain—the mournful howl of the "lobo"—the shrill yelps of the cayote, the hooting of owls, and close by the "munching" of the horses as they busily cropped the luxuriant mesquite grass on which we had staked them. Suddenly the horses all stopped grazing and a dead silence ensued for some moments, then one of them gave a loud snort,—a rush followed—pop! pop! went their ropes, and away they scampered in every direction over the prairie. I thought of course the Indians were upon us, and rousing all hands instantly we seized our guns, and hastened to the place where Henry was on guard." "What's the row," said Uncle Seth to him as we came up, "Injins about?" "No," replied Henry, "I haven't seen any. One of the horses was frightened at something, broke his rope, and I suppose that stampeded the rest." "Did you hear the pack mule snort," said Uncle Seth? "No," said Henry, "he didn't get scared at all, for yonder he stands as quiet as a mouse." "Then," said Uncle Seth, "it warn't Injins that stampeded the horses—I reckon it was only a wolf or a panther."

On looking round, we ascertained that all the animals had broken their ropes and gone off, except mine, Uncle Seth's and the pack mule. These we moved close up to the fire, and restaked them securely. "It's mity lucky," said Uncle Seth, "that all of 'em didn't git loose, for it would a been a hard job to hunt 'em up on foot. Howsomever," he added, "it's no use bothering 'bout 'em now, and we may jest as well turn in again fur we can't do nothing tell mornin'" "Hello!" said Willie, "what's become of Cudjo?—here's his blanket, but the fellow's gone." "He was lying there," said I, "when the horses broke loose, and he must have stampeded too and gone off with them." "Well," said Uncle Seth, "we must hunt him up—he's about somewhere, fur I know he wouldn't go out'n sight of the camp fire." Scattering around, we searched every place where he could possibly have secreted himself, but one after another came back and reported that Cudjo could not be found. He had disappeared in the most mysterious manner. "Well," said Uncle Seth, when we had all gathered around the fire, "but this beats all natur—what on the face of the yearth is gone with the feller is more'n I kin tell—but it's no use huntin' him till mornin.'" "I declare," said Willie, "I am quite uneasy about the poor fellow. I am afraid he got hung somehow in a rope when the horses stampeded, and that he has been dragged off and killed." "No, dat he ain't," said a voice from somewhere, "dis chile too smart for dat, and I clum out'n de way like a squirl." The voice seemed to come from some place above, and looking up, we discovered Cudjo's woolly head between the forks of one of the live oaks under which we had camped. "You black rascal," said Lawrence, "what are you doing up in that tree? I've a great mind to lift you out of it with a load of buckshot." "Oh, hole on, Mass Lawrence," said Cudjo, "I'se comin' down right off, sah," and hugging the tree tightly, he came down "by the run" like a bear. "Why, you scamp," said Lawrence, as Cudjo sauntered up to the fire, looking rather sheepish, "you're a pretty fellow to desert your friends in this way on the first alarm and take to a tree. I didn't think, Cudjo, you were such a coward. I am really ashamed of you." Cudjo scratched his woolly head, blew his nose, hitched up his pants and "hemmed and hawed" a time or two before he made any reply. At length, he said, "I clar to gracious, Mass Lawrence, I clum dat tree wen I was fass asleep. I dream Mass Jack's Mexican lion come arter me an I dream I clime de tree to git out'n his way, and shure nuff I did, an' nebber wake up till jess now—and dat's de trufe I'm tellin' you, certin'." "Well, well," said Uncle Seth, "but that beats all natur—I've hearn tell of people walkin' in their sleep but I never hear afore of one climbin' a tree." "Oh, yes, dey does, Uncle Seth," said Cudjo, "I git up one night wen I was fass asleep, and walk two miles and clime up an apple tree an' pick ebery apple off'n it afore I wake." "And what did you do then?" said Willie. "Well, I jess trow de bag ober my shoulder and tote 'em all home, fur I thought it was a pity to leff 'em all dere to rot on de groun'."

As it was impossible to do anything towards hunting up the horses until daylight, we all took to our blankets again, and nothing occurred to disturb us during the balance of the night. Uncle Seth and I saddled and mounted our horses, and started off in pursuit of our runaways, leaving strict orders that no one should leave camp until we returned. Taking the trail of one of the horses, we followed it about half a mile, when we noticed, much to our satisfaction, the tracks of the others also, which convinced us they had come together at that point, and half a mile farther on we found them all quietly grazing in an open bottom near the creek. As parts of their ropes were left on them, we caught them without difficulty and took our course back to camp, congratulating ourselves on having recovered our runaways so much sooner than we had expected.

By the time we got back Cudjo had breakfast ready, and as soon as it was over, Uncle Seth, Mr. Pitt, Henry, Willie and Cudjo started out to cut the bee trees, leaving Lawrence and myself to take care of camp and guard the horses. The bee trees were but a short distance off, and in about two hours the party returned, bringing with them about twenty pounds of beautiful white comb filled with honey, which they had taken from one tree. As this was more than we could possibly eat in a day, and we had no way of carrying honey with us, Uncle Seth thought it was useless to cut the other. Poor Cudjo! it seemed as if he was fated to meet with mishaps on every occasion. Willie came back leading him by the hand, as he had been so badly stung by the bees that both of his eyes were bunged up hard and fast, and his mouth looked like a "bologna sausage with a big gash in it." "Why, how comes it, Cudjo," said Lawrence, "that the bees stung you and didn't sting anyone else?" "Well, I dunno, Mass Lawrence," said Cudjo, "but jess as soon as de tree chop down, ebery one of de bees take right arter me, an chase me plum to de creek bottom, afore dey cotch me—but dey did cotch me at lass, and pop me in de mout an in de eye tell dey swell up jess like you see 'em." "Why didn't you climb a tree?" said Lawrence. "Oh! go away, Mass Lawrence," replied Cudjo, "you jess pokin' fun at me now, you know berry well that wouldn't done no good." Willie brought him a pan of water, and after bathing them for some time his eyes partially opened, and his lips subsided to something like their usual demensions.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNCLE SETH AND I FIND THE DEAD LION—CUDJO'S RACE WITH THE JAVALINAS—THEY TREE HENRY AND MYSELF—UNCLE SETH TELLS A YARN ABOUT A FRENCHMAN, WHO FEASTED HIM ON A SORE EYED POODLE DOG—WOLVES AROUND CAMP.

"Now boys," said Uncle Seth, "me and Mr. Jack will go out to where he shot the lion, and see ef we ken trail him up. Mr. Pitt will look arter things at camp, and let nobody leave it tell we git back." Just as we were saddling our horses we heard a great clucking of wild turkeys in the creek bottom, opposite to us, and presently five or six gobblers came flopping into the trees right over the tent. Willie brought one of them down with his double barrel gun, and Mr. Pitt killed another before they flew. "Purty well done, boys," said Uncle Seth, "and I hope you'll have them gobblers well roasted by the time me and Mr. Jack git back—turkey breast sopped in honey ain't hard to take." Mounting our horses, Uncle Seth and I rode off, and in a little while we came to the place where I had encountered the lion the evening before. Tying our horses securely to some trees in the vicinity, we went to the spot where the lion had laid down after I wounded him, and where we found a pool of coagulated blood, and splotches of it here and there in the direction he had gone off. Following the trail of blood, we at length came to a dense thicket in the bottom, into which the lion had made his way, as we could plainly perceive by the bushes and vines he had broken and twisted where he had passed through them. "Now," said Uncle Seth, as he carefully reprimed his rifle, "we must keep a good lookout, fur ef the varmint was badly wounded, he didn't go a great way, and its likely he's somewhar in this thicket." Proceeding slowly and cautiously along the trail in a few moments we came to where the lion had laid down again, as was evident from the clots of coagulated blood that were strewn about the place. "You've gin him a hard hit, Mr. Jack," said Uncle Seth, "and I wouldn't be surprised ef he was dead afore this"—and in fact, we had gone but a few steps farther, when Uncle Seth exclaimed, pointing to a number of turkey buzzards perched on a tree, "yonder's your lion, Mr. Jack—you'll find him under that tree, sartin." When we reached the spot, there he laid sure enough, as dead as a hammer. "By jingo," said Uncle Seth, walking around him, "he's a whopper, shore. Look at them teeth will you, and them claws! Why, they'd tear a buckskin huntin' shirt off'n a feller's back jess like it was made of brown paper." "But," continued Uncle Seth, "the tarnal wolves have been at him, and they've teetotally split his hide. It's a great pity, fur it would have made a splendid robe." He said he was one of the largest lions he had ever seen, and he said he had killed a good many of them in his time. Cutting off the tail of the lion as a "trophy," we went back to where we had left our horses, and mounting them returned to camp.

When we got there we found the gobblers spitted before the fire and just done to a turn, and such a dinner as we had on roast turkey, hard tack, slap-jacks and honey! As Uncle Seth said, "it jess beat all natur."

As some of our equipments needed repairing, we determined to remain at "Honey Gobbler," as Willie named this camp, until next day. Besides, while Uncle Seth and I were hunting for the lion, Lawrence had killed a very fat buck within fifty yards of our tent, and we wanted to jerk the venison to take it with us. We were ignorant of the character of the country ahead of us, and therefore concluded it would be prudent to carry an ample supply of provisions with us for fear we might not be able at all times to find game when we needed it. Uncle Seth said that occasionally, when on his hunting and trapping expeditions, he had traveled over extensive regions where no game of any kind could be had—not even a squirrel or a rabbit, and that it was always the safest plan for parties visiting unexplored countries, to take as much "provender" with them as they could carry without overloading their animals.

Uncle Seth volunteered to repair the rigging of the pack mule, which had met with several mishaps on the road, and Mr. Pitt and Lawrence said they would attend to jerking the venison, which is done by cutting the meat into thin slices, and then hanging them up in the sun to dry; or in case the weather is damp and cloudy, by placing them on a low scaffold under which a slow fire is kept burning for some hours. Willie was on guard, and as there was nothing just then for the rest of us to do, Henry, Cudjo and I rigged up a few lines, and went off to a deep pool about two hundred yards from camp, to catch a mess of fish for supper. On our way, we captured two or three dozen grasshoppers, with which we baited our hooks, and as fast as we flung them in the water they were seized by the fish that were literally swarming in the pool. In a few moments we had a score of fine perch and bass fluttering on the bank. Cudjo especially enjoyed the sport, and grinned with delight whenever he landed a fish. "I clar to gracious, Mass Henry," said he, "I never see fish bite so greedy afore. Dar go my cork agin"—and giving a violent jerk, he snapped his pole in the middle. "There, now," said Henry, "your fishing is done for to-day." "Dat he ain't," replied Cudjo, pulling in his tackle, "I mity soon git anoder pole," and he hurried off towards the lower end of the pool, where there was a dense thicket of dogwood and other small growth, into which he quickly disappeared. Presently we heard a great cracking and crashing in the thicket, and Cudjo came rushing out with half a dozen Mexican hogs or "javalinas" in hot pursuit of him. "Oh, law, goramity," screamed Cudjo, as he made for camp at the top of his speed, "run here Mass Henry, run here Mass Jack, an' doan let de debils chaw me up." The hogs followed him only a few feet outside of the thicket, but in his fright, Cudjo never noticed it, and supposing they were still after him, he kept on like a "scared wolf," yelling at every jump, "fur de Lawd's sake don't let de debils eat me up." Mr. Pitt and Lawrence had just completed their scaffold, and covered it with slices of venison, when Cudjo dashed into camp. Unluckily, when he had got within a few feet of them, he struck his foot against a stone, and pitching head foremost into the scaffold, he scattered the poles and meat in every direction. "Take 'em off, take 'em off, Mass Lawrence," he yelled, "fur de Lawd's sake, take 'em off." "Take off what?" said Lawrence, who, as well as Mr. Pitt, had seen the whole of the race between Cudjo and his shadow, "there's nothing to take off—there isn't a hog in a hundred yards of you." "Um!" exclaimed Cudjo, raising his head and looking back, "well, I clar to gracious ef dem hog ain't got back to de creek aready." "Get up you fool," said Lawrence, "and fix this scaffold which you have knocked to pieces—the hogs didn't follow you ten steps." "Fore gracious, Mass Lawrence," said Cudjo, "dey was jess at dis nigger's heel wen I got here, fur I hear he tush snap behint me jess like cushion caps." Thinking that the javalinas might possibly attack Henry and myself, Mr. Pitt and Lawrence seized their guns and hurried to our assistance. And in fact, when they saw there was no chance to catch Cudjo, the javalinas made a rush straight for the place where Henry and I were fishing. But we were well aware of the dangerous character of these pugnacious animals, and as soon as we saw them coming for us, we scrambled up a tree with a great deal more haste than dignity. The javalinas gathered around the foot of the tree, in which we had taken refuge, and were waiting impatiently for us to come down, when Lawrence and Mr. Pitt came to the rescue. They both opened fire at once upon them, and after two had bit the dust, the others took the hint, and retreated to the shelter of the thicket. Henry and I then descended from our perch, and gathering up our fish, we all started back to camp. As we passed the two javalinas that had been killed, we noticed that they seemed to be in fine condition, and Henry proposed we should butcher one of them and cook some of it for supper, just by way of experiment, and shouldering the long-legged porker, he carried it to camp. By the time we had got back, Uncle Seth had returned from his hunt, with the saddle and hams of a "spike buck" he had killed, and seeing Henry with the javalina on his shoulder, he said, "Why, what on airth are you going to do with that varmint?" "Eat it," said Henry; "ain't they good to eat?" "Well, yes," replied Uncle Seth, "and so's a rattlesnake, perviden' you are starved—but you kin jess take my sheer of it as long as we've got 'poor doe' in camp—a feller kin eat them Mexican pigs ef he's powerful hongry, but he must cut the musk bag out as soon as they is dead, else they'll taste a leetle stronger of it than most folks would like." "I should think so," said Mr. Pitt, with an expression of disgust—"rather too much of the 'gout' as the French say." "Fact is, boys," continued Uncle Seth, "a feller soon finds out in roamin' round the peraras, that there's many things that'll do to eat 'sides beef and mutton. When a feller's been on mity short commons fur a week or so, anything amost is passable, ceptin' it's a buzzard. I tried one on'em onct when I was scoutin', on the Leona, and though I hadn't had a bite of anything fur more'n two days, I couldn't go it. It was tougher than ole bull, and its legs and wings, when they was drawed up by the fire, looked like bundles of fiddle strings, and what little meat there was on it, tasted jess like a cayote smells. Buzzards ain't good, I'll admit, but almost everything else I've tried will sorter do, perviden you are powerful hongry—even rattlesnake ain't as bad as it looks, and their fat is fust rate to fry poor doe in." "What!" exclaimed Cudjo, "fry meat wid rattlesnake fat! fore gracious dere ain't none ob it gwying inter my skillit." "I agree with you, Cudjo," said Mr. Pitt, "everybody who likes them can take their rattlesnakes, skunks and bull frogs, but for my part I will always take beef or mutton in preference." "In course," said Uncle Seth, "but sometimes when we can't git biskets we kin worry down corn dodgers purty well." "Next to buzzard," continued Uncle Seth, "I ruther think the most onsatisfyin' eating I ever tried was some of them little highlan' tarrypins. Once when I was out on a scout, and we was mity hard up fur 'provender,' durin' the day, I picked up three of them varmints and put 'em in my shot pouch, thinking they would make a respecterbil bait when I got to camp that night. Well, jess as soon as we stopped, I started a fire, fur I was powerful hongry, and when it had burnt down a little, I kivered up my tarrypins in the hot embers—bein' the only way I had to cook 'em. When I thought they was done I raked 'em out and cracked 'em open with a rock, but I'm a Dutchman's boy ef there was a varsal thing inside of 'em but the backbone, which was stuck fast to the shell, and a little wad of dried grass! They's nothin' but hulls, jess like the post oak mast arter it's been blasted by the frost. I didn't have much to brag on in the way of supper that night, and I've never tried highlan' tarrypins since—'twont do to bother with 'em." "And yet," said Mr. Pitt, "the French consider them a great delicacy—almost equal to fried bull frog legs." "Yes," replied Uncle Seth, I have always hearn tell that the French was a mity handy people at cookin'—that they kin make a purty good soup out'n a brickbat, and ef so, it stands to reason they could out'n a highlan' tarrypin. It does beat all natur," continued Uncle Seth, who seemed to be in one of his moods for "yarning," "it does beat all natur the way them French kin fix up purty fair grub e'en amost out'n anything, and as it'll take Cudjo awhile to git them steaks ready fur supper, and ef you say so, I'll tell you how one on 'em once fixed up a good squar meal of vittels fur me." "Oh, of course, we would all like to hear about it," said Willie, who was as fond of a "tough yarn" as he was of a tender steak. "Don't hurry with them steaks, Cudjo, for you know I like mine well done." So saying, he took a seat near Uncle Seth, and we all did the same.

"Tain't much of yarn arter all," said Uncle Seth, modestly, "but may be so it will help to pass the time tell supper's ready. Well, you see," said Uncle Seth, after he had seated himself comfortably on an old buffalo skull he had picked up near camp, and got his pipe to going satisfactorily, "about two years ago I was huntin' some runaway stock on the outskeerts of the settlements, when I come to a shanty 'bout sundown where I had been told a Frenchman had started a ranch of some sort. As I knowed it was the only place where I could stop at fur ten miles, the way I was goin', I thought I'd ask him fur a night's lodgin', and a bite of supper. So I lit from my horse, hitched him to the fence, and went in. Jess as I stepped on to the stoop, a little fat, sore eyed poodle dog, come yelpin' out at me, but I gin him a kick in the side with a double sole, No. 10, pot metal boot, that sent him inter winter quarters right off. Bimeby, the Frenchman come in from where he was workin' in his grape vine patch, and he was mity glad to see me, fur it turned out he was an old acquaintance of mine, and had stopped at my ranch fur two or three months, when he fust come out to Texas, and I had gin him the best I had, and a good saddle nag inter the bargain when he left, because he 'peared to be a mity clever sort of a feller ef he was a Frenchman. Well, arter we had talked a long while 'bout things ginerally, the Frenchman stopped all at once, scratched his head and didn't open his mouth fur more'n a minit, and commonly, you know, a Frenchman kin out talk a woman at a quiltin'. I see he was bothered 'bout something, but in course I had no ijee what it was. At last he says, 'you travel long way today, my fren—plenty hungry, hey?' 'Yes,' says I, 'I've been riding ever sence daybreak, and I think I could worry down a mouthful or so.' 'Ah!' says he, sorter to himself like, 'eet is too bad, too bad! noting in de house fur my old frien's suppaire—eet is too bad, by gar!' and then he scratched his head agin and 'peared to be in a deep ponder. All at once he jumped up and said, 'I'll keel Marar—you stay here my fren,' says he, 'and I go in ze kitchen and make some suppaire,' and off he went in a hurry. I loaded my pipe and begun puffin' away at it tell supper was ready, fur I was as snappish as a half starved cayote. In a little while arter the Frenchman left, I hearn the sore eyed poodle fetch one squeak as ef he had got another kick in the side with a pot metal boot, and I was glad of it, fur ef there's one thing I despise on top of the yearth more'n another, it's a sore eyed poodle dog. Well, in about an hour—though I thought it was nigher onto two—fur I was powerful hongry, I was, the Frenchman came back and said supper was ready. So we went inter the kitchen where there was a little table sot out with three dishes on it, smokin' hot, a loaf of bread and a big coffee pot at the upper eend. As soon as we had tuck our seats at the table, the Frenchman said, 'Will you take cup coffee, my fren?' 'In course I will,' says I, 'never ask an old Texian ef he'll have coffee, but jess pour it out and hand it to him, and ef he don't drink it down and pass his cup fur another (pervidin' it's hot and strong) you'd better send fur a doctor, becase he's in a bad way, shore.' The Frenchman laughed a little at this, but why he did I don't know tell now, fur I wasn't joking at all. Howsomever, he poured me out a cup, and betwixt you and me, boys, I hain't drunk a better one this side New Orleans. 'Take some of ze fricassee,' says he, pushing one of the dishes handy to me. 'What you call it?' says I. 'Chien,' says he, which I thought was his outlandish name fur "chine." I helped myself to 'bout a pound of it, fur it smelt fust rate, and tasted better'n it smelt. 'Well, my friend,' says I, arter I had cleaned my plate, 'you must have tuck a power of trouble to git all the bones out'n this chine, but it's fust rate and no mistake.' 'Try a leetle of ze "boolyee,"' says he, pushing another dish in reach of me. 'And what do you call this?' says I, helpin' myself to a pound or so. 'Chien,' says the Frenchman. 'Chine again?' says I,—but it didn't look like the other mess, nor taste like it nuther, though it was fust rate and I emptied my plate in short order. 'Take some of ze "pate,"' says he, handing me the last dish. 'What's this made of?' says I. 'Chien,' says he. 'Chine agin?' says I. 'Well, well, this beats all natur. I wouldn't have thought chine could have been fixed up in so many ways,' says I. 'Oh, yes,' says the Frenchman; 'my granfader cook for ze Prance de Joinville, and he write one book de cuisine. I learn heap tings from dat book.' 'I should think so,' says I, 'and I would be glad to reckermend your grandpappy's book to the Texas people. It would be worth a heap to them in hog killin' time,' says I, 'fur then its chine, chine, chine, three times a day, and always cooked in the same old way.' Howsomever, I don't think I ever ate a heartier supper in all my life.

"The next mornin' we had chine agin fur breakfast, stewed, biled and fried, and they was all No. 1. I stowed away enuff, I thought, to last me the forty odd miles I had to ride that day, and then went out to the crib and got my nag. Jess as I was mountin' him to make a start, I says to the Frenchman, 'What's become of the little poodle dog you had here last night? I ain't seen him sence,' says I. 'Ah! poor little Marat,' says he, 'I keel him.' 'Kill him!' says I, 'and what did you do that fur?' 'Fur you suppaire,' says he, 'and I keel my granmoder ven my ole fren' come see me, and I no got noting fur him eat.' As soon as he said this I felt kinder sick at the stomack, though I ain't overly squeamish 'bout such things, but I told the Frenchman good-by and rid off, without givin' him a piece of my mind as I intended to at fust, fur, thinks I, a feller that'll kill the only stock he's got on his ranch fur my supper, has did his level best anyhow, ef it was a sore eyed poodle dog. But the more I thought 'bout that sore eyed poodle the sicker I got, tell at last I parted company with all I had tuck of him fur breakfast—but I ruther think what I eat fur supper stuck by me, fur I made a long ride that day and was as spry as a grass widder when I got to my journey's end. There's no doubt about it," added Uncle Seth by way of conclusion, "that the French can beat all natur at cookin—not even exceptin' Cudjo, though I'd bet on Cudjo's beatin' them a runnin' ef the Mexican hogs was arter him, and give 'em fifty yards the start." "Dar you comes agin," said Cudjo, "wid dem eberlastin' Mexican hog dat Mass Lawrence and Mr. Jack has been plaguin' me about tell I'ze as sick of 'em as you was of dat poodle dog. I doan want to hear nothin' more of 'em, and I'll go to sleep right off." And, saying this, Cudjo stretched himself, head on, by the fire, where he lay like a warrior (dusky) taking his rest, with his Mexican blanket around him. Pretty soon we all followed his example, except Mr. Pitt, whose time it was to stand guard.

During the night, great numbers of wolves congregated around our camp, attracted, I suppose, by the smell of jerked venison. Their incessant howling at length roused up every one, for sleep was out of the question in such an uproar. It was so terrific that even Cudjo was awakened from his slumbers. "Bress de Lawd!" he muttered, "I nebber hear sich a racket afore in all my born days. I wish Mass Seth only let me gib 'em one blizzard, I bet I make 'em yelp toder side dere mout." "Spose you do gin 'em a pop," said Uncle Seth, "'twon't do any harm, and I'm afeard ef something ain't done to stop their howlin' they'll stampede our horses." Thus encouraged, Cudjo jumped up, seized his blunderbuss, in which he had rammed a double charge of powder and buckshot. "Mind, don't shoot towards the horses," said Uncle Seth, "and take good aim at the thick of the howlin'." "Dat's jess what I'm gwine to do," said Cudjo, and leveled his piece at the thick of the howling he pulled the trigger. A report followed like that of a small cannon, and the next moment Cudjo was sprawling among the ashes of our camp fire, from which, however, he quickly scrambled forth, bringing with him a strong smell of singed wool. "I tink dey quit dere yowlin' now," said Cudjo, "but bress de Lawd! dat gun kick worse'n a pack mule. I doan care fur dat dough, case I spec I kill 'em all." We did not suppose that Cudjo had killed all, nevertheless, the report of the blunderbuss had evidently frightened them a good deal, for their howling ceased entirely, and our slumbers were not disturbed by it during the rest of the night.

Early next morning we were all roused up by the triumphant exclamations of Cudjo over the carcass of a very large lobo wolf, that had been killed by the discharge of his blunderbuss. "Look dat feller, will you," said Cudjo, as he dragged the dead wolf into camp. "I knowed I got some on 'em when dat gun go off lass night. Golly! what tush! I tell you I had ruther meet Marthy Jane on de road of a dark night dan dat feller. But I spec he won't come yowlin' round here any more." He was, in fact, one of the largest lobos we had ever seen.

CHAPTER IX.

OFF AGAIN—WILD TURKEYS EMIGRATING—A MIRAGE—MEET A COMPANY OF TRAPPERS—WILD CATTLE—UNCLE SETH KILLS ONE—INDIAN HIEROGLYPHICS—COOKING A BEEF'S HEAD—WHERE THE WILD CATTLE ORIGINALLY CAME FROM—A VAST DROVE OF MUSTANGS—UNCLE SETH SPINS ANOTHER YARN.

As soon as breakfast was over we mounted our horses, and turned our faces again towards the unexplored regions of the West. Up to this time we had followed a pretty well defined trail, leading from San Antonio to some place on the Rio Grande, but after crossing the Hondo creek, we left the trail and steered our course in a direct line towards the lower pass of the canon de Uvalde, on the Sabinal creek. Occasionally we would fall into a buffalo or mustang trail, which we would follow as long as it did not deviate materially from our direction, but usually we were guided by a pocket compass, which Mr. Pitt had with him.

No fresh Indian sign was seen to-day, except a few "signal smokes" a long way off to the northwest. About noon we halted on the bank of an arroyo for the purpose of grazing our horses an hour or so. Here we saw a most unusual sight—an immense drove of wild turkeys emigrating from one portion of the country to another. Our attention was first drawn to them by an incessant noise of clucking and gobbling, and in a few moments afterwards the head of the column made its appearance on the top of a slight elevation to our left. They were coming directly towards us, and very soon we found ourselves surrounded by hundreds. They paid no attention whatever to us or our horses, merely dividing their column to avoid us, as they did when a clump of bushes or any other obstacle stood in their way. They were moving in a southwest direction, and fully ten minutes elapsed before the last stragglers of the drove had passed us. A number of cayotes hovered about the flanks and rear of the drove, following it, as we supposed, for the purpose of picking up any that might be accidentally disabled, or give out on the way. We could easily have killed as many of these turkeys as we wished, but it would have been wanton waste to have done so, as we could not take them with us—consequently we let them pass unmolested. I had heard old frontiersmen say that wild turkeys sometimes emigrated from one section of the country to another in immense droves, but this was the first time anything of the kind had ever come under my own observation.

After resting an hour or so we proceeded on our way, and did not halt again until we struck the Seco creek, about twenty miles from our last camp. Shortly after we left the arroyo where we had nooned, we witnessed one of those singular phenomena, called a "mirage," which are frequently seen on the high and arid prairies of the west. To the south of us a single plain extended, without a single tree or bush upon it, as far as the eye could reach. Suddenly a large lake, with a forest on the farther side, made their appearance in this prairie apparently at a distance of three or four miles. But we knew there was neither a lake nor forest in that direction, for only a few moments previous to their appearance we had noticed that nothing but the open prairie was to be seen in that quarter; nevertheless, so perfect was the representation we were half inclined to believe our eyes had been deceived in the first instance, and that the lake and forest were realities. The forest seemingly came up to the edge of the lake on the farther side, and the inverted shadows of the the trees were plainly depicted in the waters below them—the shadows of a shade. "Bress de Lawd," said Cudjo, "I tink we better all turn 'roun and go back home—dere's some-t'ing wrong 'bout dis outlandish country any how—jess now dere wan't nuthin' out yander but de perara, and now dere's big woods and a pond long side of 'em. It's a mity curus t'ing, and I'm afeard we gwying to hab trouble." Uncel Seth said he had seen a great many of these mirages, and old hunters had told him of travelers on the great western plains who had been deceived by them when suffering with thirst, and enticed so far away from their route by these images of false lakes, which receded as fast as they advanced, that they perished miserably before they could gain the road they had left. "Ef dat's de way dey sarves a pusson," said

Cudjo, "I ain't gwying arter none of 'em ef I'se dyin' fur a drink, tell I see de duck and goose swimmin' 'pon 'em, and de fish jumpin' spang out'n de water. Ef dey fools me arter dat dey's welcome."

Mr. Pitt said he had a theory of his own to account for the mirage. He said that in some peculiar conditions of the atmosphere, and at certain "angles of incidence," with the objects represented, their images will be thrown upon open plains, perhaps many miles distant from the localities where the objects really exist. "But, however that may be," said Mr. Pitt, "there is not the least doubt, in my mind, as to one fact, which is, that the images depicted are always exact representations of real objects that exist somewhere." "If this were not so," added Mr. Pitt, "how does it happen that the images invariably assume the appearance of natural objects, such as lakes and forests? Beyond all question, the mirage is simply the development of some grand photographic process in the laboratory of nature." "I spec you's right Mass Pitt," said Cudjo, as confidently as if he had comprehended all Mr. Pitt had said, "I spec you's right 'bout dat, and jess as you say, de debil's at the bottom of it—I tink we better turn roun' and go back home."

Game of all kinds was very abundant in the country we passed over to-day. We were scarcely ever out of sight of herds of deer, and occasionally a herd of antelopes was seen. Once we passed a solitary old buffalo bull that was standing on the apex of an abrupt elevation gazing upon the little band of explorers so presumptuously trespassing upon his domains. He looked like a very tough old customer, and we left him in undisturbed possession of his native wilds. In the chapparal we flushed several flocks of a species of quail that differed in some respects from the common "Bob White," of the "States." They were a third larger, and of a bluish or lead-colored hue.

Just after we had emerged from an extensive chapparal into an open prairie, we saw a number of large animals of some kind, ahead of us, but they were so far off we could not tell what they were. Mr. Pitt, however, took a peep at them through his spy glass, and said they were men on horseback, or rather that there were four men on horses, and six loose animals. "See which way they are travelin'," said Uncle Seth. After another look at them through his glass Mr. Pitt said "he thought they were coming towards us, but they were so far off he couldn't say whether they were Indians or white men." "Well, ef there's only four on' em," said Uncle Seth, "it don't matter much what they are, fur we kin sartainly hold our own agin any sich squad as that." In a little while Mr. Pitt took another look at the party, and said "he believed they were white men, though he was not certain." "Let me have the 'bring-'em near,'" said Uncle Seth, whereupon Mr. Pitt handed him the spy glass, and after a long look at the party, he said, "they are white men, fur," said he, "they've got hats on, and I never knowed an Injin to wear anything on his head excepting a feather or so, or maybe a pair of bufferler horns."

When we had approached to within a mile of the party we noticed them come to a halt, apparently for the purpose of reconnoitering us as we had done them, in order to ascertain what we were, and whether our intentions were hostile or friendly. It was in this cautious and suspicious way that parties at that day, when meeting on the plains, made their advances towards each other. In this instance the strangers, it seems, soon came to the conclusion that we were white men, or else, if Indians, that our party was such a small one they could easily cope with us—at any rate they moved towards us again. As they came up within speaking distance one of them said to us, "Hello! strangers, which way are you

veling?" Uncle Seth, who as usual was in the advance,
lied that "we weren't bound fur any place in perticler—
y lookin' roun' at the country." "Well," said the one
o had first spoken, "we're mighty glad to see you any
w, for you're the first white men we've laid eyes on for the
t four months." He then informed us they were on their
y back to the settlements from a trapping expedition—that
ey had been as high up the country as the head waters of
e Llano, where they had found beavers very abundant, and
d been very successful in trapping them—that their pack
imals were loaded with their peltries, etc. He told us,
so, that they had had several very uarrow escapes from In-
ians on the waters of the Llano, and advised us to keep a
ood look out for them in that quarter. He said they had
ot tasted bread for two months, and we gave them a few
ounds of hard tack and some tobacco. In return they pre-
ented us with a dozen dried beaver tails (a great frontier
lelacacy), and as many buffalo tongues. After some further
onfab with the trappers we bid them good-by, and proceeded
n our way, and they again took their course towards the
settlements.

In about an hour after parting with the trappers, we came to some timber skirting a small stream. Just as we were about to enter this timber, we discovered a herd of wild cattle grazing on the edge of it about a mile below. Uncle Seth ordered us to conceal ourselves within the timber, and wait there until he could slip down under cover of it and get a shot at the cattle, as he said we needed something fresh for supper. "Now, boys," said he, as he dismounted from his horse and tied him to a tree, "don't budge a foot tell you hear my rifle go off, then you kin make fur me as fast as you please, fur I reckon I shall git meat," and so saying he reprimed his rifle and went off at a dog trot through the timber. I dismounted from my horse, and walked to the edge of the prairie, from whence the cattle could be seen, to watch the effect of Uncle Seth's shot. In about fifteen minutes after he had left us, I saw a faint puff of white smoke issue from the timber, and before the report of the gun reached my ears, I saw one of the cattle tumble headlong to the ground, and the remainder scampering off in the wildest affright. I hastened back to my horse, mounted him, and we all galloped to the place where we saw Uncle Seth standing by the beef he had killed. As we came up, Uncle Seth was just in the act of giving the animal the "coup de grace" by drawing his butcher knife across its throat. It was a yearling and as fat as a stalled ox. "I could have killed a bigger one," said Uncle Seth, "but there wasn't any fat cows in the drove, and a yearlin's better meat than old bull." He then stripped the hide from a part of the animal, cut out the tenderloin and about twenty pounds of steak from one of the hind quarters. "It is a great pity," Said Uncle Seth, "to leave so much good meat on the perara fur the cayotes and buzzards, but there's no help fur it. Howsomever," he added, when he had tied the pieces of meat he had sliced from the carcass on the pack mule, "we will camp purty soon, and I 'spose we might as well take the critter's head too, fur it is the best part of the animule when it's fixed up right." "Ki! Mass Seth," said Cudjo, "how we gwine to cook 'em? We can't bile 'em in de coffee pot, nur fry 'em in de skillet." "Never mind," said Uncle Seth, cutting off the animal's head and tying it to the horn of his saddle, 'I'll show you how to cook it when we git to camp. It was not more than a quarter of a mile to the creek, and as soon as we struck it, we pitched camp, near a pool of water, under the shelter of a live oak tree, so thickly covered with a grape vine, that we did not take the trouble to stretch the tent. Our encampment was just on the edge of a little prairie or rather meadow covered with luxuriant mesquite grass on which we staked our animals. Whilst gathering fuel for a fire, I noticed the representations of a dog and several arrow heads painted upon the smooth bark of a tree near by. I called Uncle Seth's attention to them and asked him if he knew what they meant. He said he did not, but that they had been made by Indians for the purpose of giving information to any of the tribe who might pass that way. He said that all the tribes he was acquainted with had certain signs and characters by which they could convey information to one another—such as the number of their party, where they had been or were going to, how many scalps they had taken, how many horses had been stolen, and if any of the party had been killed in battle, etc. We noticed similar signs and carvings frequently afterwards, some of them so ancient as to be almost obliterated, recording, no doubt, the details and incidents of many a long past foray into the settlements.

While Cudjo was preparing supper, Uncle Seth dug a pit in the ground with his butcher knife, deep enough to receive the yearling's head. In and around it he placed a quantity of dry wood and set fire to it. When the heap had burnt down to coals and ashes, he raked them out of the pit and put the yearling's head in it and coveredit over with hot ashes. Then, piling a quantity of fuel on it, he left it to its fate. "It's a slow way of cookin', boys," said Uncle Seth, "but in the mornin' we'll have a breakfust off'n that head that will beat all natur in the way of vittels."

By the time Uncle Seth had fixed the head satisfactorily, Cudjo had supper ready, and we all took our seats around the platters with appetites well sharpened by our ride. Cudjo had cooked the steaks to perfection, and after giving them a fair trial, we came to the conclusion, unanimously, that the meat of the wild cattle was more juicy and tender than that of its domesticated congener; and besides, that it had the true game flavor. "Mr. Pitt," said Henry, with his mouth so full of steak he could hardly articulate, "do you know where the wild cattle of this country originally came from?" "Yes," said Mr. Pitt, "they were brought here by the Spaniards when they first came to this country more than one hundred and fifty years ago. Some of the missions established by them were destroyed by the Indians, and the stocks of cattle and horses belonging to them, unherded and uncared for, gradually relapsed into a state of nature. From these have descended all the vast herds of wild cattle and horses that now roam the country from Red river to the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. There is one singular fact in regard to these wild cattle, which is, that there is no variety of colors among them, such as we find among domesticated stock—all of them being of a uniform dun color, with a dark streak along the back. But on the contrary, the colors of the mustangs are even more varied than those of our domesticated animals." "Uncle Seth," said Henry, "I have heard old hunters tell about the vast herds of wild horses they had seen at times on the plains between the Nueces and Rio Grande rivers, and I would like to know how many you ever saw in a drove." "I can't say adzackly," said Uncle Seth, "but onct when I was with a party trailin' Injins on the Pintas, t'other side of the Nueces, I seed a drove of mustangs that was four or five miles long, fur it was a dead level perara, and they kivered the face of the yearth as fur as I could see, and the tramplin' of their feet made sich a racket, I couldn't hear a man speak in two yards of me." "Oh, my! Uncle Seth," said Willie, "that story beats any of Baron Munchausen's. It would take a million of horses to cover the prairie as far as you could see." "I don't care how many it would take," said Uncle Seth, as he bit off the end of a plug of Virginia twi[illegible] "the horses was thar ef it tuck twenty million, fur I seed 'em with my own eyes." "Oh, I didn't mean to dispute your word, Uncle Seth," said Willie, "but it seems to me it would take a *very* great number of horses to cover so much ground." "Yes it does," naively replied Uncle Seth. "I have seed droves of two or three thousand frekwently, but that's the only time I ever seed sich a crowd of 'em together. I 'sposed they were movin' from one part of the country to another, where there was more water and grass. There was three or four wild chaps along with us, and jess for the fun of the thing, they charged their horses right inter the thick of the mustangs to make 'em stampede, but they didn't stampede worth a cent, becase they couldn't, fur the horses behind didn't know there was anything wrong ahead, and kept pushin' on so that them in the lead couldn't git out'n the way ef they had wanted to ever so bad. The boys, somehow, got tangled in the drove, and they had to travel with it four or five miles before they could get out. They, and their horses too, were sick enough of that little spree, I can tell you, and the only wonder is they wan't tramped to death. In twenty or thirty years from now," continued Uncle Seth, "I reckon the mustangs will be purty well killed or driv off, and ef a feller was to tell sich a story as that about 'em nobody would believe it, though it's true as gospel." "It's pretty hard to swallow, even now," said Willie to me in a whisper.

After supper we spread our blankets on the grass around the fire and stretched ourselves upon them, for, although we had pitched the tent, the weather was so pleasant no one cared to occupy it. It's too soon to go to sleep yet," said Lawrence, "and I move that Uncle Seth tell us another yarn;" and every one seconded the motion. Uncle Seth pulled out a plug of James river from his pocket, from which he cut slivers, and immediately stuffed them first into one side and then the other of his mouth, until his cheeks were puffed out like a ground squirrel's, and, after chewing them a while, he took deliberate aim at a blazing chunk that had rolled off the fire, and spit it out the first pop.

"Well, boys," said he at last, "I don't believe I've told you yit about the tight race the Injins gin me 'bout a year ago on the head of York's creek. You see I had went up there 'long with a party of surveyors that had hired me to hunt for 'em. They agreed to give me three dollars a day fur every day I brung as much meet inter camp as they could eat, and I never missed airning my wages but onct (though folks kin git away with a power of meat when campin' out, and bread stuffs is scarce), and that was the day the Injins gin me sich a clost race. But the fact is a feller don't hunt wuth a cent with a gang of Injins yellin' behind him like a pack of hongry cayotes; and even ef he gits away from 'em, his narves is kinder onsettled like, and he can't draw a clost bead on anything—leastwise I've found it so. Well, on that day I had started out from camp fur my reg'lar rations of meat, but somehow the deer 'peared to be oncommon scarce, and I had traveled, I reckon, 'bout four miles from camp afore I seed one. Howsomever, at last I got a pop at a drove of bucks, and upped one of 'em in his tracks. I lit from my pony (fur you see I wan't ridin' Roarer then), and hitched him to a bush tell I could butcher the deer. There was a purty large perara to the norrard, and jess as I had 'bout half peeled the hide from the buck I happened to look up that way, and I seed fifteen er twenty Injins comin' 'lickety split' jess as fast as their ponies could let it down. I thought it would be best perhaps to put off skinnin' my deer tell the weather changed, so I grabbed up my gun, bounced onter my pony and started fur camp with all the run I could git out'n him with a rank pair of spurs. I hilt my own fur 'bout a mile in the race, but then I seed the red devils was beginnin' to gain on me, and as I had nigh onto three miles yit to go afore I got to camp I thought there was a purty fair show fur your Uncle Seth to lose his scalp. Howsomever, when I found there wasn't any chance to beat the Injins a fair race I determined to stock the kerds on 'em, and 'play it low down.' 'Bout three quarters of a mile ahead of me there was a considerable rise in the perara, with some thick chapparal on the fur side, and I made fur that as fast as my pony could go. He was purty peart I knowed on a short stretch, only he couldn't keep it up, and I punished him powerfully with the spurs tell I got him to lift his feet like a reg'lar race nag, and jess as he was 'bout to 'cave in' I got to the rise, and in a minit or so I was out'n sight of the Injins. I then jumped off'n my pony, and tyin' him with the rope to a bush, I lit out on foot 'bout as fast as a man ginerally travels in that way when bizness is pressin'. My igee was that when the Injins come up and seed my pony tied to the bushes they would naterally think I was lyin' in 'em with my rifle ready to pop over the fust one that ventered in reach of it, and that it would be so long afore they diskivered I wan't there they wouldn't have much chance to catch me. And so it turned out, fur when they come in sight of my pony tied to the bushes they thought, in course, I was lying low there, and that somebody would be hurt ef they charged on me, for an Injin you see is mity cautious 'bout chargin' onto a feller when he's in a thicket and they can't see adzactly where he is, ner what he's doin'. Well, all this time I wan't standing still, I kin tell you, fur I was liftin' one foot up and then the other, and puttin' 'em down purty rapid towards camp, and I got there, I reckon, 'bout as soon as I could have made the trip on the pony. I told the boys what had brung me back on foot, without any meat, and they mounted their horses and went with me to where I had left my pony, and there he was still standin' tied to the bush. The moccasin tracks were thick all 'round the chapparal, but there wasn't one nigher than fifty yards of that pony. The Injins thought I was ~~lyin'~~ clost by, and they was afeared to ventur' up."

"Well, you fooled 'Mr. John' pretty badly that time, Uncle Seth," said Willie, "but not more complete than Mr. Pitt did last winter on the Lavaca." "How was that?" said Uncle Seth, "I want to larn all the ways of sarcumventing the red devils, fur there's no tellin' how soon a feller may have a use fur some on 'em in this country—and speakin' 'bout Injins," continued Uncle Seth, reflectively, "I never could onderstand adzactly what they was made fur, anyhow. Ef they was intended to keep the white people from settlin' up these new countries there was somethin' wrong in the calcerlation, fur they've made a dead failure of it. Ever sence Ameriky was diskivered, they've been tomerhawkin' and scalpin' folks, but jess as fast as they kill off one family two more moves out next year ten miles beyant, and the 'far west' gits further and further off every day—and ef it's a fact, as some say, that the world is round, I 'spose arter a while the nighest way to git to it will be to travel east. But I reckon," continued Uncle Seth, "that Injins was made fur somethin', but what that is I can't tell any more than I kin tell what fleas and muskeeters was made fur. Howsomever, that ain't neither here ner there," said Uncle Seth, "and I would like Mr. Pitt to tell us about the way he gin 'em the dodge over on the Lavaca."

CHAPTER X.

Mr. Pitt tells of his narrow escape from a party of Comanches—Dobell attempts the sentimental, but "peters out" disgracefully—Routing a bear from his cave—Cudjo was "in at the death," but had no hand in it—Uncle Seth tells how he made the acquaintance of the first bear he—didn't kill—The Canon de Uvalde—How the canon acquired its name—Sugar-loaf Mountain—The old mine—Uncle Seth tells how he was "jugged" by the Mexicans at Matamoros.

"Well, it isn't much of a yarn, no how," said Mr. Pitt, "and it won't take me long to tell it. Last winter I was staying at the house of a friend of mine—then the most frontier settlement on the Lavaca. There was a tract of land on a small tributary of that stream about six or seven miles from my friend's house, which I wanted to examine, and one morning I mounted my horse and started off alone, thinking I would have plenty of time to look at the land and get back to dinner—but, in fact, I made the trip much sooner than that. My friend remonstrated with me when I left on my imprudence in venturing out so far alone, but I only laughed at his warnings, and told him all the Indians in the Comanche nation couldn't catch me on 'Gitout,' as I called the half-breed horse I have now. My friend shook his head at this and told me if I depended on running away from Indians even when mounted on the redoubtable Gitout, I might find myself badly mistaken, as their superior horsemanship in riding over broken and rough country, would enable them to overtake me, although their ponies might be far inferior to mine. He said he had known several instances, since he had settled in the country, in which men had been run down and killed by Indians on their ponies, notwithstanding they were mounted on thoroughbred horses. I told my friend I had no doubt all he said was true, but that I had determined to look at a certain tract of land that day, and that I should do so, trusting in the speed of Gitout, as I had done on many former occasions—and saying this I rode off. The truth is, however, that my rashness, as my friend called it, was the result, not so much of my confidence in the speed of my horse as of the fact that no Indians had been seen in the vicinity for several months, and, therefore, I did not think it very probable I should encounter any that day. But as Uncle Seth says, when you least expect to see an Indian, then keep your eyes skinned. Although it was in mid winter, the morning was mild and pleasant, and as I galloped briskly over the prairies and through the beautiful open groves of timber that dotted them here and there, I forgot that there was ever such a thing as an Indian in existence. In about an hour I reached the locality of the land I wished to examine, and while I was busily engaged in trying to follow one of the lines of the survey by means of a pocket compass, I came suddenly on a party of Comanches, who had been hidden from view until I was in three or four hundred yards of them, by a thicket grove. They discovered me at the same instant, and giving their terrible war whoop they started towards me at full speed. I wheeled Gitout promptly in the direction of home, and digging my spurs into his flanks I hurried off from that locality, for I was satisfied it was not a healthy one. Gitout responded beautifully to the call I made upon him, and went off in regular race-horse style. At first I found I had increased somewhat the distance between the Indians and myself, but after a while I saw plainly that they were slowly gaining upon me, and that if something wasn't done pretty soon they would certainly come up with me long before I could reach the house of my friend. The Indians also had evidently noticed they were closing up on me, and evinced their exultation by the most terrific yells, which made my blood almost curdle in my veins. But there is nothing like eminent danger to sharpen one's wits—at least in the case with myself. I had given myself up for a 'goner' when a plan to escape suddenly occurred to me. About a mile ahead of me there was a creek very appropriately named Boggy, which could only be crossed at one place for a mile or so above and below it. I thought tt possible the Indians were ignorant of this, and I determined to make a push for Boggy, at a point several hundred yards below the crossing, and as soon as I was hidden from the view of the Indians by the narrow skirt of timber bordering the the western side of the creek, that I would turn my course up it, cross over as quickly as possible, and get back opposite to where they had lost sight of me, by the time they came up, and thus lead them to suppose I had crossed the creek at that point. At any rate this seemed to be the only chance I had of escaping the red devils who were yelling behind me, and I put the spurs unsparingly to Gitout and kept him at the very top of his speed until I came to the creek and got under cover of the narrow strip of timber bordering it, which concealed my movements from the Indians. From thence I quickly reached the ford, crossed over and hurried back down the creek until I was nearly opposite the point where I first struck it. I then started off on my original course through the prairie, but had scarcely gone fifty yards when the Indians appeared on the other side. They had no suspicion of the ruse I had played upon them, and the moment they saw me they yelled louder than ever, and charged down the creek bank directly opposite me, supposing of course I had crossed at that point. I halted an instant to see the result of my ruse. The Indians came rushing down the bank helter skelter, plunged into the creek, and

I had the satisfaction of seeing their riders floundering helplessly in the treacherous quicksand, which at that place would have bogged a blanket. I did not think it obligatory upon me to turn back and help 'the noble red men' out of the mire, although I was undoubtedly the cause of their getting into it—on the contrary, just before I galloped off I turned in my saddle and made some contemptuous gestures at them, which so infuriated them that one or two, who had managed to scramble out on foot, fired their guns at me, but of course without effect. I galloped off slowly, as I felt sure it would take them so long to extricate their horses from the embraces of old Boggy that they would abandon the chase, which no doubt was the case, as I saw nothing of them afterwards.

"When my friend saw me come galloping up on Gitout, and that the horse was in a lather of foam, he suspected at once what had occurred, and repeated those old border rhymes to me, beginning 'It was early in the mornin'—in the spring time of the year, That me and Gineral Johnsing went out to kill a deer, But the Injins comed upon us, and gin us sich a scare, That we returned home ag'in, and did not kill the deer.' "

"You gin the Injins a purty cute dodge that time, I'll admit," said Uncle Seth, "and you ort to marry now and settle down on Boggy fur the rest of your days. It sarved you a good turn once, and it mout do so ag'in ef your wife got rantankerous, pertickler ef she didn't know the fords well—but," continued Uncle Seth, taking an observation of the full moon, which was then in the mid heavens, "I think it's about time fur all honest folks to be in bed," and so saying he picked out a soft place on the grass, rolled his blanket around him, and was soon fast asleep. All the rest followed suit except myself, for it was my time to stand guard, and in a little while not a sound was audible in camp, save the incessant champ! champ! of the horses as they cropped the luxuriant grass, and the snoring of Uncle Seth and Cudjo, who seemed to be carrying on a kind of "nasal duet." I am conscious I have but little sentiment in my composition, and yet when alone at night on the "boundless prairies" I have experienced something very akin to it as I have watched the stars, slowly and silently moving across the heavens, and listened to the weird and melancholly sounds wafted to my ears from the "wilderness" by the passing breeze, itself the most mournful of all, as it sighs through the rank grass or the foliage of overhanging trees. This feeling I have never experienced in cities or the crowded haunts of civilization, for the reason, I suppose, that one's identity is lost in the multiplicity of numbers, but alone in the forest or prairie we feel as if we were an *appreciable* portion of the mighty universe around us, and —and—(N. B.—If anybody is writing a "dime novel," and they should think they could work the foregoing into it advantageously, they are perfectly welcome to make use of it.

In a couple of hours Lawrence came out and took my place on guard, and returning to camp, I rolled myself up in my poncho, and slept like a log until morning. Sentiment always did have a stupefying effect upon me. When I awoke, I found that everybody was up, and that Uncle Seth was busy preparing the yearling's head for breakfast, which he had unearthed, and which he said was done "jess right." After carefully stripping it of the scorched hide, he scraped off the fat and fleshy parts of the head into the frying pan, and then breaking the skull with a hatchet, he scooped out all the brains with a spoon and mixed them with the meat. This, he salted and peppered to taste, and then fried the whole mess with a little bacon gravy. "Now, boys," said Uncle Seth, when it was done and he had helped each one to a liberal portion of it, "now, boys, jess tackle that will you, and when you hear folks talkin' 'bout their frog's legs and chicken fixins, tell 'em they won't know what good eatin' is afore they tries a beef's head." In fact, it was excellent, and we were unanimous in our praise of it, particularly Cudjo, who gave it as his deliberate opinion "that Mass Seth's yearlin' fixins was better'n 'possom fat and sweet mertaters;" and, of course, after that, nothing more could be said in its praise.

As soon as breakfast was over, we packed up our goods and chattels, mounted our horses and took our way towards a line of high hills to the northwest. Nothing unusual occurred on the route, and about an hour before sunset we struck the Sabinal creek, several miles below where it breaks through the chain of high hills that hem in the canon de Uvalde. We had steered our course, as we thought, directly for the pass, and had expected to camp that night in the canon, but Uncle Seth had been misled as to the precise route by mistaking one high hill for another, in consequence of which, we struck the creek several miles lower down than he intended. As night was so near at hand, we concluded to stop, which we did, beneath the shelter of a grove of pecan trees that grew in a small valley shut in by high hills. We did not think it worth while to pitch the tent, for within twenty paces of the spot we had selected for our camp, there was a huge flat rock projecting from the bluff, under which we concluded we could take shelter if any change of weather should render it necessary to do so. The little valley was covered with a rich growth of wild rye and mesquite grass, on which we staked the animals. "Boys," said Uncle Seth, "while you's fixin' up things 'bout camp, I believe I'll step out and git some 'fresh' for supper." But just then Willie, who had gone off a short distance to collect some fuel, came running back and reported that there was a bear in a small cave a hundred yards or so above us. "Why, how do you know he is in the cave," said Lawrence, "did you see him?" "Yes," said Willie, "I did. He came down a tree close by me and ran into the cave. He had broken off a good many branches from the tree and thrown them on the ground." "Oh yes," said Uncle Seth, "he was up thar buddin', fur at this time of the year they lives mostly on the buds and twigs of some sorts of trees. Well, boys," said he, "I reckon I'll not go arter deer meat, fur bar meat is better, pervidin' it ain't poor and tough, so we'll go and see ef we can't rouse this feller out'n his den." We were all ready for the sport, and seizing our guns, hurried off to the cave. "Cudjo," said Uncle Seth to that dusky Chevalier Bayard, who had left his pots and platters and snatched up his blunderbuss with the evident intention of having a share in the fun, "I reckon you'd better bring a chunk of fire along with you, fur I expect we'll have to smoke the bar out'n his den." In a few moments we reached the cave, which was at the foot of a high bluff. The entrance was about as large as a hogshead, and we all anxiously peered into it to see if Mr. Bruin was within, but it was so dark inside that nothing was visible beyond a few feet from the opening. "I don't know how we can get him out of his castle," said Henry, "unless we send Cudjo in after him." "Fore gracious," said Cudjo, "I ain't gwine inter dat hole ef you trow a bag of money down dar." "Oh, there's no danger," said Henry, "for a bear won't fight in his den." "Umph! de debil truss him," said Cudjo, "fur I won't." "Boys," said Uncle Seth, "there ain't but one way to git cuffy out'n that hole, and that is to smoke him out. Let Cudjo start a fire jess inside the cave, and we'll stand outside with our guns, and as soon as the smoke fetches him, we'll all have a pop at him." Uncle Seth's suggestion was acted on at once, and whilst Cudjo was kindling a fire just within the mouth of the cave, we stood around it with our guns cocked, ready to give cuffy a general fusillade as soon as he should make his appearance. After a while, Cudjo, who was just within the mouth of the cave, called out, "I tink he gib in purty soon now. I hear him snifflin' fur he breath." Scarcely were the words out of his mouth when we heard a great "rippit" in the cave, and Cudjo rushed out, closely followed by the bear, that could no longer endure the stifling smoke with which the cave was filled. Bruin, however, was as badly scared as Cudjo, and evidently thought of nothing but making a retreat as speedily as possible; but the moment he showed his snout outside, the contents of half a dozen guns were poured into his carcass, and he fell dead. Cudjo had grabbed his blunderbuss as he came out of the cave, and was just in the act of letting it off at the dead bear when Lawrence stopped him. "Did you ever see a fellow as scared as Cudjo was when he came from that hole?" said Willie. "He had turned right ashy, and his eyes stuck out of his head like a crabs. Why, you coward," continued Willie, "the bear wasn't after you at all—he only wanted a little fresh air." "Maybe so," said Cudjo, "but I tink he want some nigger too, fur I see de debil in he eye when he come snortin'—dey look jess like two ball ob fire—and I tell you what's de fac, Mass Willie, de next time you trees a bar in a hole like dat, you kin jess go in dar and make smoke youself, fur I ain't gwine to do it agin, certin."

The bear proved to be a young one about half grown, and though not fat, (as they seldom are in the spring of the year), nevertheless, was in pretty fair condition. We lugged him into camp, where we butchered him at our leisure, after we had cut off some choice steaks and handed them over to the tender mercies of Cudjo. "Boys," said Uncle Seth, "you musn't be too hard on Cudjo fur gittin' out'n the way of that bar so quick. I remember mity well I was as bad scared as he was the fust time I ever got inter clost quarters with one of 'em." "How was that?" said Willie, who was always on the qui vive for a yarn. "Soon arter I fust come out to Texas," said Uncle Seth, "I concluded I would take a hunt one day on purpose to kill a bar. Well, in the course of the day, I seed one busy rootin' among some dead timber, a hundred yards or sich a matter from where I was. 'Bout half way betwixt me and the bar, I noticed a big oak tree that had been blowed down, and as I thought the bar hadn't seed me, I concluded I would crawl up to that tree, which would bring me within fifty yards of him, and then, with a dead rest on top of it, I made sure I could fetch him the fust pop. So I got down on my hands and knees and crawled along towards the tree, snaking my gun arter me as I went. I never riz up to look tell I come to the tree, for fear the bar mout see me, but when I got to it, I slowly raised up to take a peep at him, and jess as my head come even with the top of the log, the bar poked hisen over from the other side and our noses almost teched. He gin one yowl and tumbled backwards, and I gin another and tumbled backwards, too, on my side of the fence, and when I had sorter come to, I seed the rascal tearing off like a harrycane fur the swamp. I don't know tell this day which was the the wust scared, me or that bar."

The night passed off quietly, and the next morning after an early breakfast, we packed up as much of the bear meat as we could carry, and started for the canon de Uvalde some four or five miles distant. Our course was up the creek, and the country we passed over was rugged and broken, and intersected in some places by deep gulches which were difficult to cross, but at length we came to the "pass" and began to ascend the high rocky ridge that shut in the valley on the south, along a very narrow trail, hardly wide enough at any place for two horses to travel abreast. After toiling up this rugged pass for some time, we finally reached the highest point, and the whole valley of the Uvalde came at once into view, extending northwardly as far as we could see, and surrounded on all sides by precipitous rugged hills, covered with stunted cedars and other kinds of shrubs. On a small plateau of ground, the very apex of the high ridge we had ascended, we all halted a moment to look at the beautiful valley, spread out like a map before us. It was indeed a charming and romantic scene that presented itself to our sight—one I had never seen surpassed, even among the mountains and valleys of the Blue Ridge of Virginia. The valley was about twenty-five miles in length, and varying from two to five in breadth. The Sabinal (Cypress) a clear, rapid stream meandered through it in curves, from side to side, its whole course from the high point where we stood, being plainly marked out by the tall cypress trees growing along its margin. The valley was undulating but not broken, and was dotted here and there with groves of live oaks, pecans, elms, and other forest trees, giving it a parklike appearance. Far away up the valley, Uncle Seth pointed out some dark looking objects, which he said were either buffalo or wild cattle. We all took a look at them through Mr. Pitt's spy glass or "bring 'em nigh," as Uncle Seth called it, and satisfied ourselves beyond all doubt that they were buffalo, their shaggy manes and humps being distinctly visible by means of the glass. Descending by a narrow crooked trail very similar to the one we had come up, we at length reached the valley proper, and crossing over to the western side, we pitched camp near the Sabinal, in a large grove of pecan trees, a few hundred yards above the point where the stream had forced its way through the high ridge at the southern extremity of the valley. The pass along the stream, as we afterwards ascertained, was almost impracticable even for a man on foot, for the bed of the creek was obstructed by many huge boulders that had rolled down from the cliffs on each side. In fact, as we found out subsequently, the canon could be entered on horseback at but two points—through the pass we had just traveled and by a similar one at its northwestern termination. Everywhere else we saw, on all sides, only precipitous walls of rock, broken and jagged, and sparsely covered where the inclination was not too great for the accumulation of soil, with a growth of small cedars and various thorny shrubs. In some places, little rivulets poured down the sides of these rocky walls, forming beautiful miniature cascades which sparkled in the sunlight like veins of molten silver. The canon took its name from that of a Spanish officer (Uvalde) who, according to tradition, surprised a large party of Comanche warriors in it, and having taken the precaution to station a force at each of the passes, not one of the Indians escaped.

In the grove where we had stopped, we found the remains of a large Indian encampment—broken lodge poles, numerous pits that had been used for cooking purposes, and quantities of bones and other offal scattered around; but the "sign" was all old, showing that the encampment had been abandoned for several months. Apparently about a mile to the northeast of the grove in which we had camped, we observed a singular sugar loaf hill, rising abruptly from the plain, and as soon as we had staked our animals, Mr. Pitt, Lawrence, Willie and myself took our guns and started off with the intention of climbing to the top of it. But in place of being only a mile off, we traveled at least two before we reached it, so much had we been deceived as to its actual distance. The western side of the sugar loaf hill was almost perpendicular, but to the east it was somewhat sloping and we determined to ascend it and see what was to be seen from the top of it. Depositing our guns at the base, we began to climb the hill, which in some places, even on that side, was so steep that we had to pull ourselves up by grasping projecting points of rocks, or the stunted shrubs growing in their crevices. At length, with considerable difficulty, we gained the top, and the view we had from our elevated position amply paid us for our labor. We could see the whole valley spread out before us, and near at hand, so near apparently that it seemed as if we could almost have thrown a stone into it, our camp in the pecan grove, with the horses picketed around it, and the smoke from our fire curling up above the top of the trees. The hill terminated in a sharp point, consisting of a flat rock not more than twenty or thirty feet in diameter. Around the edges of this rock there were a good many loose boulders, and we amused ourselves for some time rolling them down the precipitous sides of the hill. It was glorious fun, Willie said, to see them rushing down the steep declivities like an avalanche, gathering momentum as they descended, until at last crashing with irresistible force through everything in the way, they went bounding on the plain below. "If we only had a good supply of 'dornecks' up here," said Willie, "we could whip the whole Comanche nation." "Oh, no doubt of it," said Lawrence, "but suppose they were to pitch their camp just beyond the range of our rocks and wait patiently for us to come down for water or something to eat—what then?" But Willie made no reply to this as his plan of warfare did not include a regular siege. After we had exhausted all our ammunition in the shape of boulders, we concluded to descend from our impregnable position, but before we did so, Willie pulled off an old red flannel shirt he had on, and tied it to the end of a stick, which he stuck in a crevice of the rock. "There," said he, when he fixed it satisfactorily, "I hereby formally take possession of the canon de Uvalde in the name of Gen'l Sam Houston and the Republic of Texas." We gave three cheers to Willie's banner which flaunted bravely "from the outward walls," and started down the hill, which we found to be more difficult than coming up, and before we reached the bottom we all had a tumble or two, but without serious injury to any of us. Shouldering our guns, we started for camp, but had gone only a few yards from the base of the hill when we came very near walking into a deep pit, the mouth of which was almost wholly concealed by thick bushes growing around it. Near this pit or shaft, there were heaps of scorial and rubbish, and the remains of what evidently had been a furnace. The shaft was twenty-five or thirty feet deep, and on one side of it, leaning against the wall, there was a rude ladder constructed of two cypress logs with rounds fastened between them. Mr. Pitt attempted to descend the shaft by means of this ladder, but on trial he found it was so decayed he was afraid to venture. He was the only one of us who pretended to any knowledge of such things, and after some examination, he came to the conclusion that a mine of some kind had been worked there a long time ago, probably by the Spaniards, but what sort of metal they had taken from it he could not tell, although, from the appearance of the ore scattered around the old furnace, he had but little doubt it was silver. He took some small pieces of the ore and put them in his shot pouch, intending, as he said, to have them assayed the first opportunity he had, but he lost them before we returned to the settlements. [I have never visited the canon de Uvalde since that time, nor do I know whether or not any one ever subsequently discovered this mine, but it can be readily found, as it is only a few steps from the northeastern base of the sugar loaf hill in the lower end of the canon.]

We got back to camp just as Cudjo had dished up dinner, and as our walk of five or six miles, to say nothing of our scramble up and down "Sugar Loaf," had whetted our appetites, we seated ourselves without much pressing around the platters, and did ample justice to his cookery. The dinner consisted of bear steaks, flapjacks fried in bear's oil, hard tack, a pot of boiled rice, coffee, etc., and wild artichokes, which last grew abundantly in the vicinity of camp. After we had drank about a quart of strong coffee apiece, and partaken of the substantials in proportion, we felt as if we could have tackled the highest peak of the Rocky Mountains if it had been handy to us. The wild artichokes mentioned in the foregoing bill of fare, grow abundantly in some portions of northwest Texas, usually upon rocky and barren soils. The plant is very similar in appearance to "bear grass," but its leaves are serrated and of a deeper green. The best mode of cooking them in the woods, is the same as that for cooking a beef or deer's head. A trench is dug and a fire built in it. When thoroughly heated, the ashes and coals are raked out and the roots put in and covered with them, where they are left for several hours. Prepared in this way they are really an excellent vegetable, and make a very acceptable addition to the hunter's ordinary repast. We told Uncle Seth about finding the mine near Sugar Loaf hill, and he said he had been informed by the Mexicans at San Antonio, that a great many years ago the Spaniards had worked silver mines in this canon, but he did not know that any traces of them had ever been found unless the shaft we saw indicated the locality of one. "There ain't no doubt at all," continued Uncle Seth, "that the Spaniards, who were terrible fellers for nosing out gold and silver, did work a good many mines in this section, and some day when the country settles up they will be found."

As it was two o'clock in the evening by the time we had finished dinner, Uncle Seth concluded it would be best to remain where we were till next morning, and give our horses a chance to "fill up" on the luxuriant grass in the vicinity. It was so fine, that instead of picking a mouthful here and another there, as horses usually do, they "mowed" it evenly along as they fed. In order to keep us employed, Uncle Seth made us overhaul all our guns and pistols. Clean and oil such as needed it, and see that all our equipments generally were in good condition. "There ain't nothing," said he, "that helps more to keep a man's har where it naterally belongs, in an Injin country, than always havin' his shootin' irons in good fix. About home it don't matter so much, but in these diggins a feller mout lose his har jess becase his spring triggers wan't well greased. In time of peace you know, we must prepar for war. I hope there won't be any war, but ef there should be it will be a real satersfaction to know we kin depend on our shootin' irons."

After the work of cleaning our arms was finished, each one occupied himself for the rest of the evening as he chose. Henry was on guard. Mr. Pitt and Lawrence went off prospecting in the gulches for "nuggets." Uncle Seth "stepped out," as he said, to get a "venson." Cudjo went to work with needle and thread to sew up several gaping rents in the rear of his pants through which a good deal more of his shirt was visible than the bosom, and Willie and I went fishing in a deep pool about a hundred yards below camp. We found it literally swarming with fish of several varieties, and they were so totally unsuspicious of the hook that it seemed almost cruel to take advantage of their ignorance. In less than an hour we caught more than we could possibly eat for supper, and returned to camp. Mr. Pitt and Lawrence came in soon afterwards with "their pockets filled with rocks" but there were no rich nuggets among them—nothing in fact more valuable than some beautiful crystals of quartz. In a little while Uncle Seth came in also, bringing with him the tenderloin and hams of a fat "barren doe." By this time Cudjo had finished his tailoring, and went to work to prepare supper out of the abundant materials with which we had supplied him. Several of us occasionally lent him a helping hand, and notwithstanding the old saying, "that too many cooks spoil the broth," in a little while we sat down to a repast that would have tempted the appetite of an anchorite—hot coffee, strong enough to suit the taste of an old Texan—bear meat, venison steaks, fried bass and perch, flanked by platters of "dundefunk" highly seasoned with chili pepper. Everyone wielded a trenchant knife and fork—especially

Cudjo, who when he had finished his vigorous onslaught on the eatables, gave it as his deliberate opinion that "dis Uvalde canon would be a fust rate place to live in ef it wan't fur dem dratted Injins dat's always skulkin' roun' here wid dere bow and arrer, jess to git a chance to sculp folks that's gwying about tendin' to their own bizness. What you reckon dey was made fur anyhow, Mass Lawrence?" "Well, I don't know," said Lawrence, "what you reckon javalinas were made for?" "Oh, shucks! Mass Lawrence, ain't you nebber gwying to quit talkin' 'bout dem eberlastin' Mexican hogs? I 'spose dey's made to run arter nigger, but dey don't cotch him ebery time, I kin tell you." "No," said Lawrence, nor bears either." "Well, I'd ruther have the bears arter me dan de javalinas, fur dey's mity good meat ef you kin git 'em, but dem dratted long leg Mexican hog will run a nigger tell his tongue loll out, and den when you cook 'em dey's dat strong a tuckey buzzard couldn't eat 'em." "A penny for your thoughts," said Willie to Uncle Seth, who was sitting silently by puffing his pipe and diligently whittling a splinter of cedar wood. "I was jess then thinkin'," said Uncle Seth, "ef a feller could only come back to this country fifty or sixty years from now, he wouldn't hardly know it. The Injins, the buffalers and the bars would then all be gone—houses, fields and gardens would kiver all the land, and instead of the yelpin' of wolves and cayotes, he'd hear the chicken cocks crowin', the church bells ringing, the childring laughin' as they went to school, or hunted haws and 'simmons in the woods, and may be so, the puffin' and rattling of a steam engine on the iron rails. I ain't a very old man yit," continued Uncle Seth, "and I've already seed three States grow up out'n the wilderness, that's filled now with white people and their housen and farms and big cities. I reckon it's all fur the best, though I can't help feelin' a little sorry when I see the bufferlo and the bars driv further and further back every day, and big farms fenced in, right where my best hunting ground used to be. Howsomever," added Uncle Seth, reflectively, "I reckon there'll be game enuff somewhere to last my time, and that's all I need care fur. I ain't got no fambly to look arter and I kin pull up stakes and foller it as I've been doin' for the last thirty odd years." "I will not have to exclaim then, like the Moor," said Mr. Pitt, "Othello's occupation's gone." "I never knowed Mr. Othello," said Uncle Seth, "but ef he had nothin' at all to do I pity him. I never was in that fix but onct myself, and that was when the Mexicans had me jugged at Matamoros, jess becase I stole some horses from 'em to pay for them they stole from Texas. They kep me nigh onto two months in a little room 'bout eight feet squar, with only one winder to it, which wan't much bigger than the mouth of a bottle gourd, and there wan't a thing inside of it exceptin' your Uncle Seth and the bufferlo hide he had to sleep on. I tell you boys, I never was so hard put to it to pass the time in all my born days. Ef I had had a leetle soft pine er cedar fur whittlin', it wouldn't have been so bad, but they wouldn't let me have it nor a knife to whittle it with. I berlieve ef it hadn't been fur a mouse I would have gone plum crazy afore I got out'n that jug. I counted every crack in the walls and made a calcerlation of how many squar inches there was in 'em, floor and all, which tuck me a considerable time, fur you see I was never very spry at cypherin', but at last I got through with the sum, and then I said over to myself everything I had learnt by heart, including the multerplication table, and two or three prars my mammy had learnt me, when I was a little shaver, and which I hadn't said fur many a long day before, the more's the shame fur me. At last I got through with everything I could think of, and then all I could do was to lay down on my bufferlo hide and look at the naked walls, that shut out the blue sky and the green grass and trees. One day when I was layin' in this way and just ready to gin in fur good, I seed a little mouse poke his head out'n a hole, and look roun' in a sort of inquirin' way. 'Come in my little feller,' says I, afore I thought what I was doin', 'come in and I'll treat to the best I have,' which was a crust of bread. But instead of comin' in, he dodged back inter his hole, and I didn't see him any more for an hour. Then he poked his head out agin, and this time I kep as still as a mouse myself, and purty soon he crept out easy, and little by little he sided up to a crust of bread that was layin' clost to my face. I didn't wink my eyes, and when he had eat as much as he wanted, he slipped back agin to his hole. Well, from that time on, he come out every day reglar fur his breakfast, dinner and supper, and at last when he found I wouldn't hurt him, he got so tame he'd eat out'n my hand, and then jump aroun' the floor like a kitten. There's no tellin' the comfort that little varmint was to me, and I railey berlieve ef it hadn't been fur that mouse that I would have gone stark stavin' mad afore I got out'n that jail in Matamoros. No boys," continued Uncle Seth, "this thing of havin' nothin' to do, is the hardest work I've ever tackled yit, and I'd a heap ruther be out here in the woods foot loose, ef I had to run from bears and javalinas every day, than to live safe from all sorts of varmints in that jail at Matamoros.'

CHAPTER XI.

Mr. Pitt's odorous yarn—Turkey roost—Dobell shoots one without getting out of bed—Kill our first buffalo—The beaver's dam—Buffalo steaks and ribs for Supper—Uncle Seth tells how Bill Shanks, on his little muel, beat his race nag "far and squar"—Willie sticks a slow (but sure) match to Cudjo's foot.

"That story," said Mr. Pitt, "reminds me of a little affair I had with a mouse myself, and as it's too soon to turn in yet, I'll tell it to you.

"Soon after I came to Texas," said Mr. Pitt, "I went with a party from Houston to Austin. As there was some talk of establishing the seat of government at the latter place, and I held a clerkship in the House of Representatives, I wished to see the locality that probably would be my 'stamping ground' for some time to come. There were ten of us in the party, all well armed and mounted, for anywhere after leaving the suburbs of Houston we were likely to encounter hostile Indians; and in fact, we had quite a lively skirmish with fifteen or twenty Comanches, at the crossing of ——— creek, in which one of our party was so badly wounded we were compelled to leave him at the next settlement. But that has nothing to do with my present yarn.

"A few days after our arrival at Austin, five or six men from eastern Texas stopped there, who were on their way to the city of San Antonio. I had heard a great deal about the 'ancient city' and was desirous of seeing it before returning to Houston. Finding the men from eastern Texas had no objection to my joining them I determined to do so. At that time the only settlement between Austin and San Antonio was the village of New Braunfels, and as there was no public house in the place for the accommodation of travelers, my kind landlady, who was aware of the fact and knew I would have to camp out a night on the way, wrapped up two or three pounds of cold mutton and some biscuits in a napkin and handed it to me just as I was mounting my horse to leave. I thanked her, slipped the package in my saddle bags—and forgot all about it until after my arrival at San Antonio. My companions had a pack mule loaded with supplies for the road, and as they insisted I should take supper with them when we encamped, I forgot entirely I had a snack in my saddle bags. It was in the latter part of June, and as usual at that season of the year in Texas, the weather was so hot as to render the stereotyped question, 'is this hot enough for you,' entirely unnecessary, for it was hot enough to suit a Hottentot. Soon after we started the next morning one of my companions asked me if I did not notice a very disagreeable smell. I told him I did and that I had observed it now and then ever since leaving camp. This disagreeable odor continued to follow us persistently all day, and the same question was frequently asked by others, but nobody could answer it, unless as some one suggested there had been a very fatal epidemic amongst the stock in the country.

"About two o'clock in the evening we arrived at San Antonio, and put up at the 'Veramendi,' at that time the only public house in the city, kept by a Mr. Lockmar, an Italian. There were no private rooms for guests in the establishment, but one large apartment in which there were sixty or seventy canvas cots, served as a common dormitory for all. Lockmar ushered us into this room and pointing out a cot to each one of us, he told us they were ours as long as we saw proper to stay at 'the best hotel in Texas,' and that dinner would be ready for us in about an hour, when we would have a show at some of the 'best beef and frijoles in Texas.' As we found out subsequently, Lockmar did not exaggerate in the least as to the quality of his fare, but even 'the best beet and frijoles in Texas' will become a trifle monotonous, if they are served up three times a day for weeks, without anything else.

As we wished to take a look at the city while dinner was being prepared, we threw our saddle bags under the cots alloted us, and sallied out upon the streets. I did this without the least fear of losing my 'luggage,' and would have done so even if my saddle bags had contained articles of much greater value than a spoilt snack,—which they didn't—for whatever may be said against the 'old Texans' they are not given to pilfering. I admit that they are a little careless sometimes in the way they handle their 'shooting irons,' especially, when a Mexican is likely to be shot if they should go off accidentally, but such crimes as robbery or murder for plunder is altogether unknown among them. But, I am wandering from my story, and will 'return to my muttons,' in the saddle bags, albeit they are badly tainted.*

*NOTE.—In corroboration of Mr. Pitt's assertion "that robbery and murder for plunder," were crimes unknown to the "old Texans," I will relate the following incident: Not long after the close of the Mexican war, I was employed by Maj. Hutter, paymaster of the U. S. Army, to act as his guide in going from one place to another in Texas, for the purpose of paying the "extra claims" due the soldiers who had served in that war. The first question Maj. Hutter asked me when I joined him at Houston, was "Do you think it necessary I should have an escort with me?" He said he would have more than half a million in gold in his ambulance, but if I thought he could travel safely through the State without an escort, he would risk the chances of being robbed, as the government would not pay for one. I told him if he had to defray the expenses of an escort, I would certainly advise him to travel without any, as I thought I knew the Texans well enough to guarantee he would not be robbed on the trip. Maj. Hutter took my advice and with only two men and his driver and more than half a million in gold in his ambulance, he traveled

"When we supposed we had given the landlord of the Veramendi House time enough to have dinner prepared for us, we turned our steps towards it. As soon as we came in sight of it we perceived that somethidg unusual was taking place at the hotel, as a crowd was standing around the entrance, and others were seen hurrying out, every one, singularly enough, with a handerchief pressed tightly to his nose! As I entered the door I met a Frenchman hastening out, and I asked him if the hotel was on fire. Instead of answering my question, he said, 'My fren, vill you be so goot to tella me eef you know vere I find some room in zis house wizout ze dead dog? Ah, pouff! eet is vorse zan ze turkey boozard's denair.' Utterly mystified by what he had said, I hurried on to the dormitory and just as I reached the doorway an Irishman came bolting through it with his nose closely pressed between his fore finger and thumb. 'What's the row, my friend?' said I. 'Row?' said he, 'Faith and bejabers if you go into that room you'll purty soon find out what the ruction is.' And he went on without further explanation. I stepped through the door and the moment I did so I was nearly floored by the most villainous smell that ever saluted

safely over a large part of Texas and through thinly settled portions of the country where often a house was not seen for fifteen or twenty miles. Besides, Maj. Hutter had advertised in the papers some time before he left Houston, that he would be at desiguated towns and villages on such and such days for the purpose of paying those who had served in the Mexican war, and of course everybody in the country knew that necessarily, he would be compelled to have a very large amount of money with him—yet he made the trip safely and without the loss of a dime. I'll bet my old "slouch" against a Mexican sombrero with a silver snake "quiled" around it, if Maj. Hutter, or anyone else should attempt to-day to travel the route he did in '48, with half a million in gold in his ambulance and only three men to guard it, he wouldn't get twenty miles from where he started before the "road agents" would order him "to hold up his hands."

my nostrils—and I have been in New Orleans, during the dog days. All the guests who had congregated in the common sleeping apartment to take their evening's siesta, (then 'the costumbre del pais') had risen from their cots, and were running here and there, examining closely every nook and corner where it was possible a dead animal might be hidden. Lockmar and all his 'peons' were present also, aiding in the search for the dead dog (or whatever it was). Stepping up to him I asked him if he had any idea what it was that caused such a horrible smell in the house. 'No,' said he, 'I haven't—when you and your friends came here, most of my boarders were lying on their cots taking their siesta, and in a few moments after you went out the row began,—and as they are all alive yet, and we have searched the room closely without finding even a dead mouse, I am wholly at a loss to account for it.' Just then one of the boarders who was peeping under my cot with his nose in six inches of of my saddle bags, exclaimed, 'It's close about here somewhere, certain.' 'What is it? Where is it?' Said every one as they crowded around my cot. At that instant for the first time, I thought of the snack of cold mutton I had put in my saddle bags at Austin! Thinks I it will never do to let all hese people know that my snack is at the bottom of all this commotion. But how to get it out of my saddle bags and out of the house without being observed was the question. Fortunately, there was a little cuddy in a corner of the room near me used as a receptacle for worthless trash, and peeping into it I exclaimed loud enough for every one in the room to hear me, 'Here's your dead dog at last.' In a moment everybody had gathered around the cuddy, and taking advantage of their eagerness to get a peep into it, and the general confusion, I slipped through the crowd unnoticed, hurried to my saddle bags, tore them open, seized the snack and—'Ah, pouff!' as the Frenchman said, 'eet vas vorse zan ze turkey boozard's denair.' Hastily thrusting it under the skirt of a frock coat I was wearing, I sauntered towards the door, looking as unconcerned as I could and as if I had no particular interest in the row that was going on; but like the Spartan youth who kept a smiling countenance while the stolen fox under his toga was gnawing at his vitals, rather than confess the theft, my 'sang froid' was altogether assumed. A number of the guests (refugees from the dormitory) had collected on the street about the entrance to the hotel, and I was compelled to pass through the crowd. As I did so, two dozen noses were simultaneously grasped by as many fore fingers and thumbs, and no wonder, for I bore along with me an atmosphere by no means as fragrant as the breezes 'that blow o'er Ceylon's spicy isle.' As I went through, I heard my Irishman say, 'Begorra, if that mon has ony friends they ought to have buried him a wake ago.' I didn't stop to argue the point with him, but walked on till I came to a cross street, and turning the corner, I threw that snack as far as I could send it into a back yard. When I returned to the hotel 'all was quiet along the Potomac,' and everybody was wondering what could have caused 'that horrible odor' which had disappeared as suddenly and as mysteriously as it came. I could have enlightened them on the subject, but failed to do so."

When Mr. Pitt had finished his odorous yarn, Willie asked him for a bottle of cologne, "Haven't the article among my camp supplies," said Mr. Pitt. "Well, you ought to keep it on hand," said Willie, "to take the taste out of a fellow's mouth whenever you tell that yarn."

Just after dark, we heard a great many wild turkeys flying up to roost in the pecan trees near camp, and in the morning we were roused up by an incessant gobbling and clucking that was enough to have awakened the "seven sleepers" (exactly our number). The trees around seemed to be alive with turkeys. When I had got my eyes fairly opened, I noticed a big gobbler on the top of a small pecan tree, not more than thirty yards from where I was lying, and the temptation to "hist him out" as Uncle Seth would say, was too great to be resisted. We always slept with our guns by our side, and seizing my rifle, I raised up partially, took deliberate aim at the gobbler, and at the report of the gun he fell with a heavy "thud" to the ground. "My!" exclaimed Cudjo, who was lying near me, "ef dat don't take de rag off'n de bush—and de tucky too. I neber see anybody afore lay right in he bed, and shoot gobbler, widout gittin' up er even kickin' de kiveren off'n him. Dis Uvalde canon is de best place we come across yit, where de tucky gobbler fly right to you bed and ax you ter shoot 'em. I tink I could soon larn to hunt here myself." "Yes," said I, settling myself back on my blanket, "hunting isn't such hard work here as it is in the old States. It is much more comfortable to lie in your bed and have the game come to you than it is to tramp for half a dozen miles through swamps and thickets and may be so never see anything bigger than a tomtit. Go out Cudjo," said I, "and bring in the gobbler, and we will have some turkey steaks for breakfast. I have a pretty good appetite after my long hunt this morning."

As we were all anxious to see something more of the canon de Uvalde, we determined to devote one day at least to its exploration. We therefore packed up most of our dunnage and stowed it away in the forks of a tree out of the reach of wolves and other wild animals, and turned the pack mule loose to follow after us. Then mounting our horses, with nothing to encumber us but our guns, we started off towards the northwestern end of the valley. The Indian trail we followed led us directly up the canon, occasionally crossing the Sabinal creek, which meandered from one side of it to the other. It was a lovely morning, not a cloud was to be seen, birds were flitting about and chattering in the groves, herds of deer were visible in every direction, and occasionally a herd of antelopes were seen "skimming" over the prairies, for they do not run like deer by leaps and bounds. For seven or eight miles we traveled up the valley without anything of interest occurring, but we were charmed with the beautiful scenery that everywhere presented itself to our view. At one place a few yards above where the trail crossed the Sabinal, the stream poured over a solid wall of rock, eight or ten feet high, into a deep pool at the base. This pool looked like a glorious one for bass and perch, and Willie and I wished very much to cast our lines into it, but just then we were on the look out for more exciting sport. About a mile beyond this pool, where the valley was wider perhaps than at any other point, Uncle Seth who was riding ahead, suddenly came to a halt and pointed out to us half a dozen buffalo that were grazing in the vicinity of the largest body of timber we had seen in the canon. "Now," said he, "I think it's time we had a taste of bufferlo hump and ribs, and ef we manage right I'm purty sure we kin git one of them fellers. We've got the wind of them, and by keeping yon little 'mot' bertwixt them and us, we kin git in three or four hundred yards of the drove. Then we must make a dash on 'em, every feller fur himself, and it will be a hard case ef some on us don't git meat, afore they takes to the brush." The buffalo were perhaps half a mile from us, and moving along cautiously until the "mot" mentioned by Uncle Seth hid us from view, we turned directly towards them, and advanced at a brisk gallop. The buffalo did not notice us until we had passed the mot and were within three or four hundred yards of them. Then the race began in earnest, the buffalo heading for the timber and we following them "helter skelter" as fast as we could urge our horses on with whip and spur. "The bufferlo is a mity deceivin' animule to git over the ground," as Uncle Seth would say. To look at them from a distance when running, you would suppose they were making but little headway, but when in pursuit of them, notwithstanding their awkward lumbering gait, you would soon find that it takes a good horse to come up with them, especially when going down hill or over rough and broken ground. In this chase, however, as we were all well mounted, and the buffalo had not much the start of us, we soon closed on them and gave them a fusillade from our guns and pistols. They at once turned towards the nearest timber, and all succeeded in gaining it except one cow which Mr. Pitt disabled with a well aimed shot from his derringer, and before she could make her retreat to the timber Uncle Seth rode up and finished her.

One by one the balance of us returned from our unsuccessful pursuit of the others, and we all gathered round the carcass of the cow Mr. Pitt and Uncle Seth had killed. After awhile Cudjo made his appearance on the field, but before he got within thirty yards of us, his horse caught sight of the buffalo lying on the ground, and wheeling suddenly, ousted him from the saddle. Fortunately his head struck first and of course he was not hurt, and soon joined us leading his unruly steed by the bridle. "How many buffalo have you killed?" said Lawrence, to him as he came up. "Fore gracious!" Mass Lawrence, said Cudjo, "I ain't been in a hundred yards of a bufferlo dis day ceptin' dat one lyin' dere on de groun'. Dis horse git ole Nick in 'em jess as soon as you start to run, and he ain't done nothin' but pitch right up and down in one place eber sence. I'm gwying to steal anoder one from de Injins de bery fust chance I git." "No," said Lawrence, "that won't do. The only way to get a horse in this country is to kill the rider and take him, and it's all right, but if you take the horse and don't kill the rider, that's stealing and you'll swing for it to a certainty." "Den I'll stick to 'paint,'" said Cudjo, "fur I ain't gwying to kill nobody fur he horse. Paint's a mity rascal sometime, it's a fac, and won't budge a foot if he take de notion in he head—but dere's one ting certin', ef I can't be up at de killin', I'll be mity close roun' when de steaks is cookin', and dat's de main pint." "This critter," said Uncle Seth, poking the ribs of the cow with the muzzle of his gun, "is fatter'n butter, and ef Cudjo manages 'em right, we'll have some steaks when we git back to camp to-night that will beat bar meat a long ways. But we must butcher her now, and hang up the meat out'n reach of the cayotes." In a few moments with our assistance, Uncle Seth "peeled the hide" from the buffalo, and then cut off the hump, about fifty pounds of tenderloin, and a side of ribs, which he hung up in the fork of a tree, and covered with the robe to prevent the buzzards from destroying it. "It's a pity," said Uncle Seth, as he mounted his horse, and looked with longing eyes at the huge mass of fat buffalo meat lying upon the ground, "it's a pity to leave so much good beef fur the cayotes and tucky buzzards, but it can't be helped—we've got all we kin carry back to camp. There's many a poor fambly in the settlements that would be mity glad to have all that good beef we've left on the ground, and I wish they had it. But that's jess the way with things in this world," continued Uncle Seth, in a moralizing sort of strain, "some folks have more'n they know what to do with, and others haven't got nothin' at all—but I reckon it will all be squared in the eend—leastwise I hope so."

Continuing our route up the valley, which became more wild and picturesque the farther we went, we traveled on until about noon, when we halted in a grove on the banks of the Sabinal, to rest our horses and let them pick a little grass. Just opposite to where we stopped, the beavers had built a dam across the creek, and upon examination we found that their work had been done strictly according to scientific principles, so as most effectually to resist the pressure of the water and force of the current—at any rate, so said Mr. Pitt, who had been a practical engineer himself. Inside of the dam, the houses in which the beavers lived, were built, the tops only being visible above the surface of the water. They were constructed of poles, and plastered with what appeared to be a mixture of mud and grass. We noticed that nearly every sapling (and some trees of considerable size) about the pond, had been cut down for "house logs." "It does beat all natur," said Uncle Seth, "the judgematical way these varmints carry on their work. I sorter berlieve myself, as many old hunters do, that they are boss carpenters turned into beavers, fur cheatin' folks. When Bill Sykes and me was trappin' on the Guadalupe," continued Uncle Seth, "I tried mity hard to catch the varmints at their work, fur I wanted to see how they managed, but fur a long time I never could, as the cunnin' critters always diskivered me, no matter how sly I was, afore I could git in a hundred yards of 'em, fur you see they keeps sentinels reglar on the watch—I determined though that I would sarcumvent 'em ef I could, so one day I tuck a spade and dug a hole clost to their dam, deep enuff fur me to git in, from which I could peep out and see all that was goin' on in beaver town, without any chance of bein' seed myself, and I kivered up all the dirt I throwed out'n the hole with dry leaves and grass, so the beavers wouldn't notice it. 'Bout sundown I went to the dam, and got into the pit I had dug and kep perfeckly quiet. Soon arter dark the moon riz up and made it as light e'en a'most as day, and I thought every minit I would see the varmints come out and go to work, but fur more'n an hour I didn't see nor hear a thing, and I begun to think that may be so it was beaver Sunday, and that they wouldn't work that night at all—but still I kep quiet and never budged except now and again to poke my nose above the top of the pit to see if anything was goin' on. I had jess made up my mind that there wan't any use in stayin' longer, when I seed an ole beaver come out'n his house, on to the top of it, and look all aroun'. The cunnin' varmint suspicioned something was wrong, fur he snuffed the wind, and looked mity hard towards the place where I was hived. But at last he 'peared to think that all was right, and liftin' up his flat tail he brung it down on the ruff of his house with a loud smack. The next minit the beavers begun to scoot out'n their houses, and dividin' up into squads, some begun to cut down saplin's with their teeth, whilst other squads hauled and rolled them into the water, and some drug mud and grass on their flat tails to a place where others were mixin' mortar. All the time this work was goin' on, the ole chap that had come out fust and flapped his tail on the ruff of his house, was flyin' round from one squad to another, orderin' this thing to be did that way, and that thing to be did this way, jess as if he had been the boss of the whole lay out—and I 'spose he was. It was raily divartin' to see the way they carried on, everyone workin' like —a beaver at his own pertickler business. Bimeby I hearn a great racket and to-do at one eend of the pond, and peekin' roun' that way out'n my hole, I seed eight or ten of the beavers with the ole boss directin' 'em, workin' at a big saplin' they had cut down. They had got it to the edge of the water, but there somehow it had stuck fast betwixt two rocks, and they couldn't move it one way or the other. The ole boss was in a tearin' rage, runnin' fust to one eend of the log and then to the other and cussin' the whole crowd (I know he was, in reason, though I couldn't hear him) fur a lazy good fur nothin' set of vagabones—but yit the log never budged an inch. By this time I'd got considerable interested in the job myself, and seein' how easy it would be fur me, ef I had been there, to have histed the log into the water, I sung out as loud as I could afore I knowed what I was doin', 'Git a prize under the butt eend, ole hoss, and she'll come certin.' But the minit I said that, bang! went the ole boss' tail on the yearth, and quick as a wink every beaver let go all holts and tumbled into the water, and in a minit everything was as quiet roun' the dam, as if there wan't a beaver in five miles of it. The last thing I seed of 'em was the ole boss jess flappin under the water, arter the rest of 'em had all scooted. It was so funny the way the varmints acted, I laughed till I shuck the dirt from the sides of the pit. Then I crawled out and put off fur camp, and that was the fust and last time I ever seed the beavers at their work." "Why, you must have surprised them when you sung out," said Mr. Pitt, "as much as Tam O'Shanter did the witches, when he roared out, 'weel done cutty sark!'" "May be so," said Uncle Seth, "though I never hearn tell of Mr. Shanter, and I've knowed, one time or another, purty much all the ole settlers in this country—but come boys," he said, "its time we were moving and we'd better saddle up our nags."

As soon as we were ready to start, a "council of war" was held as to whether we should continue our route to the upper pass, or return to our camp at the lower end of the canyon. Uncle Seth, who had several years previously, been to the head of the canyon, said we would find it very similar to the part we had seen. We therefore finally concluded to go back, as we were anxious to get into a region that had not been explored by white men. Cudjo especially was strongly in favor of turning back, and the "flesh pots of Egypt" were evidently "reaming in his head." "We got good camp groun' dar," said Cudjo, "plenty fat turkey en arterchokes, an den dars dat bufferlo cow, Mass Pitt kill dat we've got to 'tend to." "The cayotes have 'tended to that long ago," said Uncle Seth, "but anyhow, I reckon, it will be best to go back," and so saying he turned his horse's head towards the lower end of the valley and set off at a brisk trot, the rest of us following as usual in single file.

When we came in sight of the place where we had left the buffalo, we saw a large gang of wolves collected around the carcass, and many cayotes outside waiting for a chance to pitch in—which they didn't get. The wolves were so intent on helping themselves, they did not observe our approach until we were within a hundred yards of them, when Willie put spurs to his pony and charged among them, compelling them to beat a hasty retreat. But the greedy rascals, as Uncle Seth said, had already "'tended" to it, scarcely a pound of flesh being left on the bones. However, the meat Uncle Seth had hung up in a tree, was all safe, and taking it down we divided it amongst us, and started again for camp.

Nothing of particular interest occurred on the way, and about an hour before sunset we passed the "Sugar Loaf" hill, on the top of which Willie's red flannel shirt was still flaunting bravely in the breeze, and a few minutes afterwards we trotted into our camp where we found all our goods and chattels just as we had left them.

In a little while after we had staked out our horses, and made everything snug for the night, Cudjo gave us the pleasing intelligence that supper was ready, and nothing loth we all gathered around a huge platter filled with delicious buffalo steaks, flanked on one side by the inevitable coffee pot, and on the other by smoking plates (tin) of hot "dunderfunk." "Too much praise," as we used to say in war times, could not be given to the vigorous manner in which we assaulted the steaks, and in fact the "pile" diminished so rapidly, that Cudjo became apprehensive nothing but the platter would be left for his share. "Fore gracious ! Mass Willie," said he to that young gentleman who had "backed his cart" for another load of steak, "we gwying to hab brekfust in de mornin', and I tink you better knock off, ef you don't want ter founder youself." "Oh, I don't care if I do founder," said Willie, I've got a receipt to cure founder that never fails—have tried it on a dozen horses."

All hands, however, were at length satisfied, and still there was more left than Cudjo could dispose of, although he took his time as usual and laid siege to it regularly. "How do you like buffalo steak, said Henry to him?" "Dey's splendid," said Cudjo, grinning with satisfaction, and showing a set of white teeth, that glistened in the fire light, in strong contrast with his greasy black skin, "Mass Seth say fur true, dey's better'n bear meat." "Yes," said Uncle Seth, "bar meat's powerful good, but a fat bufferlo cow's the best of all, onless it's a fat pole-cat." "What? You don't mean a skunk?" said Cudjo, "I never hearn tell of anybody eatin' one of dem varmints." "Yes, I mean a skunk," replied Uncle Seth, "the Injins like 'em better than anything else, and I tell you, they is mity choice in their grub when they've plenty of it. But there's one thing you must remember, and that is, to butcher 'em and cut out the musk bag, jess as soon as you kill 'em. Ef you do that, you'll find that they that they are better'n they smell." "Yes," said Mr. Pitt, with a strong expression of disgust, "they might do that and still taste worse than a dose of salts and senna."

After supper, we stretched ourselves upon our blankets around the fire, and Willie suggested that Uncle Seth should be called upon for a yarn. But Uncle Seth, just at that moment, was busy at work trying to clean out the stem of his pipe, which Willie had mischievously plugged up with a piece of wood. "Well, I declar'," said he, sucking vigorously at at the stem, "ef this don't beat all natur—can't git a bit of smoke through the dratted thing, and I never could talk onless my pipe was goin'." "Oh, if that's all," said Willie, "hand it over to me and I'll soon fix it for you." Uncle Seth handed Willie the pipe, who dexterously extracted the plug at once with his pen-knife. "It works all right now," said Uncle Seth, as the smoke rolled out from his mouth, "and I kin talk as fast now as a woman at a quiltin'. The fact is, boys," added Uncle Seth in a moralizing sort of way, "terbacky is a quare kind of thing anyhow. When a feller gits used to it, he can't git along without it at all, and yit when he has it, it don't seem to satisfy him much. Once when I was out with some Rangers on a scout arter Injins, every bit of terbacky we had was used up, and every feller in the crowd ither chawed or smoked when he could git it—and the only chance to git more, was at a little grocery about two hundred miles from where we was. Sich a sore-headed, cross-grained set of fellers you never seed. You couldn't say a word to one of 'em, no matter how perlite, but what he'd snap you up as short as pie crust. I don't berlieve there ever was a set of fellers in better fightin' trim, and I tell you what's a fact, ef I wanted to make a desp'ut fite, I'd pick out a crowd of ole terbaccy chawers and keep 'em 'bout a week without a taste. Then I'd turn 'em loose on the enemy, and it wouldn't be long afore the green was kivered with bits of skull and tufts of har."

"But how about that yarn," interrupted Willie, who took but little interest in the discussion of the tobacco question, "how about that yarn, Uncle Seth?" Uncle Seth pulled a stalk of grass and mechanically ran it through his pipe stem, which had got partially choked again, and then replied, "Well, what shall it be—let's see—Oh! did I ever tell you 'bout the race I had with Bill Shanks, when he beat me 'far and squar,' though I was ridin' a reglar race nag, and he was on a little Spanish muel?" "No, you never told us about it," said Willie,—but you don't mean to say, Uncle Seth, that a mule beat a race horse fair running?" "That's adzactly what I said," replied Uncle Seth, "fur there wan't no jockeyin' in that race, I kin tell you. You see me and Bill

Shanks, one of my ole compadres, 'bout the time the government was moved to Austin, went up there to take a look at the city, and the country round about. Well, it didn't take us long to see all there was to see in Austin, and we concluded to have a bufferlo hunt, jess to pass away the time. So we greased up our shootin' irons, and put out fur Brushy creek. Bill on his little Spanish muel and me on my race nag. I told Bill he was venterin' a good deal to trust himself in an Injin country on sich an animule as that, but he said there was a heap of 'come out' in the critter, and that he would take the chances on him. 'All right, Bill,' says I, 'ef you ain't afeard to trust yourself on him it's your funeral, and you have the right to choose your own gait; but I kin tell you one thing,' says I, 'ef the Injins should get arter us, you needn't expect me to wait fur you.' 'Nuf ced,' says Bill, 'you jess take care of your own har, and I'll see arter mine.' Well, we crossed the perara betwixt Austin and Walnut creek without seein' a bufferlo, though their sign was plenty. We then struck out across the perara betwixt Walnut and Brushy, and arter we had gone prehaps 'bout five miles, and jess as we was turning short roun' a pint of timber, we come upon twenty Comanches, mounted on their ponies. The minit they seed me and Bill, they gin a yell, and come fur us like a perara on fire in a high wind. 'Bill,' says I, 'there ain't but one chance fur you—drap your gun and jump up behind me on my nag, may be so he can carry us both, and beat their ponies.' 'No,' says Bill, 'he can't do it with me and you both on him. I shall trust to the little muel.' 'Don't be a fool,' says I, 'Bill, but jump up behind me at once, afore it's too late. 'No,' says he, 'I won't do it—I told you I would trust to the muel, and I'm goin' to do it.' By this time the Injins was in two hundred yards of us, and seein' there wan't no use in tryin' to git Bill to jump behind me, fur I knowed he was as obsternate as a muel himself when he tuck a notion in his head, I driv the spurs into my nag and left poor Bill sittin' stock still on his little muel, that jess then 'tuck the studs,' and wouldn't budge an inch one way or the other. I hated mitily to leave Bill in this way, you may depend, fur we had hunted and trapped fur months together, and slept side by side many a night on the same blanket, but, what could I do? It was foolishness I knowed, to stay there and be killed, fur there was no show fur us to fight off twenty Comanches in the open perara, and my gittin' killed wouldn't have saved Bill. So I let out Roarer, as I called my nag, and never looked behind me fur I didn't want to see the Injins killin' Bill. In a few minits I hearn a terrible yellin' and shootin' of guns, and I said to myself, 'poor Bill, he's catchin' it now on that little blasted muel of his'n, and his sculp will soon be swingin' from some Comanche's belt,' but still I never looked back fur I didn't want to see what was goin' on, but I pushed ahead as fast as Roarer could link it down. I had run I 'spose 'bout three miles, when I hearn a horse's hoofs comin' pitity pat, pitity pat, clost behind me. I thought in course it was one of the Injins mounted on a better horse than common, who was overhaulin' me, and lookin' roun' at him, I cocked my gun, thinkin' that as soon as he got nigh enuff, I'd wheel my horse of a suddent and let him have it. Purty soon I knowed by the sound of the horse's hoofs that the feller was gittin' clost enuff to be slingin' his arrers at me, and I wheeled my nag as quick as wink, and come mity nigh pullin' the trigger on Bill, fur instead of bein' killed and sculped as I thought, it was him holdin' fast to the little muel's mane, that was picking up his feet like a scared jackass rabbit, and he passed me jess as if I'd been standin' still—which I wan't. As he went by, Bill sung out to me, 'If I git there afore you do, I'll let 'em know you're comin' too, and tell 'em at Robinson's grocery to have a snifter reddy fur you,' and in five minits he was out'n sight in the timber on Walnut, and I never seed anything more of him tell I got to Austin. Bill told me when I left him on the perara he had gin himself up fur a goner, case his little muel had tuck the studs and wouldn't budge though he kep rammin' the spurs into him rowel deep, and though he knowed there was a power of 'come out' in him ef he could once git him started, he couldn't git it out'n him jess then, with whip nor spurs. But all at once, Bill said, the Injins seein' what a fix he was in and thinkin' they had him shore, gin a tremenjious yell and shot three or four guns at him, and then fur the fust time the little muel 'peared to onderstan' what was up. He fotch one jump that come mity nigh histin' Bill out'n the saddle, and then all he had to do was to hold on to his mane and let him rip. He left the Injins so fur behind him in a little while, that Bill said when he last seed 'em they had stopped still on the perara, and were lookin' in wonderment at the way the little muel made the dirt fly. 'I tell you,' said Bill, 'there's a heap of come out in a Spanish muel, ef a feller only knows how to git it out'n him'—which are a fact, but that's the trouble, as Bill found out not long afterwards, fur the Injins got him at last while he was huntin' bufferlo on the Gabriel. That little muel of his'n got back to camp with an arrer sticking through his ear, but Bill wan't on him, and the next day we found the poor feller lyin' dead on the perara, with about a dozen 'dogwood switches' stickin' in his body. The come out in the little muel come out time enuff to save himself but a little too late fur Bill. We buried him right where he lay," said Uncle Seth as unconsciously he knocked the ashes out of his pipe on Cudjo's big toe, that was sticking up in reach of him, "and I reckon he's jest as comfortable there as ef he was in a graveyard with palins roun' it, and with a big marble tomb stun stickin up at his head."

Cudjo had listened attentively for some time to Uncle Seth's yarn, but before he had ended, sleep overcame him, and he was soon engaged as usual in his nocturnal occupation of "sawing gourds." On this occasion, however, for a wonder, he had lain down with his feet to the fire instead of his head, and their white bottoms glistened conspicuously in the light. The sight of them suggested an idea to Willie, who got up the moment Uncle Seth had finished his yarn, and mixing a fuse of wet powder, he stuck it to the sole of one of Cudjo's feet and touched a live coal to it. The fuse burnt down to the skin and went out, but Cudjo still continued to saw gourds, apparently in no wise incommoded by the burning of the fuse, for the bottom of his foot was exceedingly thick and it took the heat some time to penetrate to the quick—but it did so at last with a vengeance, and Cudjo bounced up like an India rubber ball, and went hopping round on one leg, much to Willie's amusement. "Why Cudjo, what's the matter with you," said Willie, "are you dreaming that the javalinas are after you again?" "No," replied Cudjo, "a dratted chunk roll off'n de fire, plum agin dis nigger's foot," The smell of burnt powder was very strong and I think Cudjo had his suspicions of foul play, but he "quiled" himself up in his blanket again, and in a few moments was oblivious of the woes and pains of this sublunary sphere.

CHAPTER XII.

Leave canyon de Uvalde—Reach the Rio Frio—Abundance of game—Meet with a party of Choctaw Indians. Make a social call upon the Choctaws—Take dinner with them—They help Cudjo too liberally to "tid bids" and he makes his exit suddenly and unexpectedly—Mr. Dobell's yarn.

After an early breakfast the next morning, we mounted our horses and left the canyon by the pass through which we had entered it. When we reached the summit of the pass, we turned to take a last look at the beautiful valley below. "'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view," said Mr. Pitt, who was "a leetle fond" as Uncle Seth observed, of showing off his "book larnin'," but the Canyon de Uvalde loses none of its charms even on a close inspection, and some day it will be a great resort for the lovers of picturesque and romantic scenery. "I could live there contentedly," continued Mr. Pitt, waving his hand theatrically towards the valley below, "until my hair turned gray, provided, I had one congenial soul I wot to of keep me company." "You'd better say, tell yer har was histed," said Uncle Seth, "fur it would be, shore, long afore it turned gray, ef you hadn't more than one of them 'congenials' to back you. 'Tain't a safe place I kin tell you fur any crowd that's smaller than ourn."

The last thing I saw as we turned the "divide," was Willie's red flannel shirt looking like a speck in the distance, still fluttering in the breeze from the apex of Sugar Loaf hill. Descending to the table land which set in at the foot of the pass, and extended westward as far as the eye could reach, we took our course along the base of the hills, through what was then an unknown region of country. At several points our progress was much impeded by dense chapparal and deep gulches, but we made our way at length through and over all obstacles until we came in sight of the long line of timber that indicated the proximity of the Rio Frio, on the bank of which we intended to pitch our camp. As we descended from the mesa into the river valley, which at the place we entered it was about a mile wide, we were astonished at the great amount of game that was everywhere visible within the scope of our vision, although we had found it as we thought exceedingly abundant in other localities—great herds of deer—here and there a herd of antelopes, numerous flocks of turkeys, and at one point several hundred buffalo, quietly grazing near the edge of the timber that fringed the bank of the Frio. It was just such a scene as I had often pictured in imagination when reading Daniel Boone's account of the vast quantity of game he found on his first exploration of the "dark and bloody ground." Uncle Seth's eyes glistened as he gazed upon the numerous herds of deer, antelope and buffalo grazing upon the luxuriant grass that grew in the valley, and Willie and Henry were eager to charge at once upon the buffalo. Even Cudjo was somewhat excited, and voted for a run at them, although he knew there was but little chance of his getting near enough to the buffalo to use his blunderbuss, for at the sight of them his half-breed horse already began to show signs of pitching. But Uncle Seth put his veto on such a move peremptorily. "No, boys," said he, "it is strictly agin orders, to hunt on the march. Arter we git into camp, and fix everything snug, and see ef there's any fresh Injin sign, you can have a chase arter the bufferlo pervidin' there ain't nothin' wrong."

The deer and other game with which the valley was swarming, paid but little attention to us as we trotted along, but the buffalo started off at a full run as soon as we had approached near enough for them to see distinctly what we were. For a moment they huddled up together as if undecided what course to take, when one of them led off at a rapid gait up the valley, the rest followed, and turning a point of timber were soon lost to view. Their running seemed to be a warning to everything else that danger was near, and soon every herd of deer and antelopes in sight were scampering away towards the mesa, and in a few moments after the buffalo started, not a single wild animal was to be seen in the valley. "When the bufferlo run," said Uncle Seth, "everything else takes to their heels, for they have found out I suppose, that the Injins are not fur off." Going on we soon came to the Frio, a clear bold little stream running over a rocky bed. At the point where we struck it, the banks were so steep we found it impossible to get our horses down to water, and we continued on up the stream half a mile or so, until we came to a place where the buffalo and wild horses had by long use worn a passable road down the bank. Here we pitched our camp under a large live oak tree that stood near the centre of a small opening, that was almost surrounded by a dense growth of chapparal. Through this there was but one narrow entrance into the little open space in which the live oak stood, under the thick foliage of which we had pitched our tent. Everywhere else it was so dense that even a man on foot would have found great difficulty in penetrating it. "Now boys," said Uncle Seth, after we had staked out our horses, and made all snug about camp, "we'll have a safe roostin' place to-night ef we never git another. If it wan't a temptin' of Providence to say so, I could almost wish the Injins would give us a turn here jess to see how Cudjo would hist 'em with that fusee of his'n." "I don't want nothin' to do wid dem varmints," said Cudjo, who evidently sympathized but little with Uncle Seth's warlike ardor, "an ef dey'll jess let me alone, dey kin eat dere pole-cat and tarrypin an' I shan't trouble 'em sartain." "Cudjo," said Uncle Seth, as we all lay stretched out upon our blankets taking our ease in "Sprawls Tavern," "step out to the edge of the perara and see how our horses are comin' on." (We had staked them outside of the little open in which we had camped in order to reserve the grass inside for the night's grazing.) Cudjo obeyed rather reluctantly, for he had just settled himself in a comfortable position for a cat nap before commencing his culinary operations, but there was no disputing the orders of the commander in chief. In a few moments after he went out, we saw him coming back at the top of his speed as if the "Mexican hog" were again in pursuit of him. He was evidently terribly frightened by something, and as he rushed into camp, he struck his foot against one of the tent pins and pitched head foremost on the ground. "Snakes alive!" exclaimed Uncle Seth, "what's the matter now?" "Oh, de Injins comin—de Injins comin, an dey'll take all our sculp shore. I wish ter gracious I wus back to ole Mass Rivers, an you nebber cotch dis nigger out side de fence agin." "How many Injins did you see?" said Uncle Seth. "'Bout five hundred," replied Cudjo, and dey's comin right straight here hard as dey kin." "Run out, boys," said Uncle Seth hurriedly, "and fetch in the horses. I berlieve the feller has seed Injins shore enuff." We all sprang to our feet instantly, and ran to the place where we had staked our horses. As soon as we got outside of the chapparal surrounding our camp, we found that Cudjo had indeed partially told the truth, for a band of mounted Indians were seen about a mile distant, coming directly towards us, but instead of five hundred, according to Cudjo's enumeration, we could only count twenty. "Take in your horses, boys," said Uncle Seth, "and I'll tend to mine and the pack muel." Each one sprang to his horse, and in a few moments we had them all safe inside our "entrenchments." We then seized our guns and hurriedly prepared for the anticipated scrimmage. "Get up, Cudjo," said Willie to that son of Mars, who was lying on the ground, "quiled up" head and all in his blanket, "get up and take your gun, we are going to have a fight right off." "Dat ole gun all out'n fix," said Cudjo, "day tech hole done stop up, and de frizzen all wored out. I tink, Mass Willie, we better gin up, an may be so de Injins won't take nothin' but de horses and our pervisions." "They'll take your wooly scalp," said Willie, "if you don't get up and fight, that's certain." Plainly, Cudjo had no stomach for that kind of business, but seeing there was no help for it, he took up his blunderbuss, and followed the rest of the party to the entrance, where we all halted, and anxiously watched the movements of the Indians. "There's twenty of 'em adzactly," said Uncle Seth, "and we can whip forty of 'em easy from this thicket. Cudjo is good for ten of them, I know." "Dat I am," said Cudjo trembling so he couldn't get his ramrod into the muzzle of his gun, as he attempted to push down wads upon a handful of extra shot. "I'll get some on 'em shure, ef dey comes clost enuff, but I tink Mass Seth, dey's too many ob 'em, an' we better make treaty wid 'em." If Uncle Seth heard this pacific advice, he certainly did not pay the least attention to it. By this time the Indians had approached to within three or four hundred yards, when they came to a halt and appeared to be engaged in earnest consultation. "I don't adzactly know what tribe of Injins they belong to," said Uncle Seth, scanning them closely with his hand over his eyes—they ain't Comanches, and I'm purty shore they ain't Tonkeways or Lipans." Presently one of the Indians rode out towards us, waving a white rag tied to the end of a ramrod." "They want to have a talk," said Uncle Seth, "and I'll go meet that feller and hear what he's got to say. Keep cool, boys," he added, "and watch their motions clost, and I'll soon find out what they's arter," and saying this he walked out eighty or a hundred yards into the prairie, and waited for the Indian to come within speaking distance. Without halting, the Indian rode up to where Uncle Seth was standing, leaning on his gun, and we saw them shake hands. "They are friendly Indians," said Mr. Pitt, "and we won't have a fight this time, after all." "Mity well fur dem dat dey is friendly," said Cudjo, whose courage had risen astonishingly when he saw there was no prospect for a fight, "for I got forty buckshot in bof barrel ob dis gun, an' she gwine ter hurt somebody when she go off." "May be so," said Henry, "but I'm very much afraid, if we do get into a fight that she'll 'go off' and Cudjo with her." "Doan you fret yourself 'bout dat," said Cudjo, "you tink cause I trimble a little, dat I'se scared; but I always does dat when I get mad." "Well, you musn't get so mad the next time," said Henry, "that you can't get the ramrod in the muzzle of your gun."

In a little while, Uncle Seth and the Indian came to where we all were standing. "This," said he, "boys," by way of an introduction, "is a Choctaw chief, an old friend of mine; 'Big Drunk' they calls him in his tribe, for he will get on a powerful spree once in a while, when he's in the settlements, but he's a fust rate feller arter all. I've hunted with him many a day, and he's one of the sort that will do to 'tie to,' ef he is a Injin." We all shook hands with Big Drunk in acknowledgment of this introduction. He was a fine looking fellow, and his horse, from which he had dismounted, was one of the best specimens of the mustang I had ever seen. "Belly glad see you all my flens," said Big Drunk, in his broken English, "me tink fust wen me see you horse stake out you Comanche—no like 'em Comanche, and we want fur fite 'em—Comanche no good." "Which way are you travelin' now?" said Uncle Seth to him, after he had gone the rounds and shaken hands for the second time, with every one, not excepting Cudjo, who however eyed him very suspiciously, as if he wasn't quite sure that his professions of friendship were not all put on for the purpose of throwing us off our guard. "Oh, me go San Saba to catch 'em beaver," replied Big Drunk, "plenty beaver San Saba." "That's the very place, boys," said Uncle Seth to us, "we're bound fur, and I think it will be a good plan for us to travel 'long with the Choctaws tell we get there." Then turning to Big Drunk he said: "We're going to the San Saba too, and as there ain't but a small crowd of us, we'd like to travel with you, may be so plenty Comanches on the road." "Oh yes," said Big Drunk, "Comanche heap too much, Comanche belly bad Injin, but Choctaw whip 'em,—got two Comanche scalp," pointing to a couple of pieces of dried skin, fastened to his belt, with a long tuft of hair hanging from each, "may be so, purty soon git 'em some more." Big Drunk then told Uncle Seth, that they would be glad to keep company with us, but that our horses were in fine condition while theirs were much jaded and consequently they were compelled to travel very slowly. Uncle Seth told him that that suited us exactly, as we were merely looking at the country, and the slower we traveled the better chance we would have to see it. It was therefore agreed between them, that the Choctaws should pitch their camp a short distance from ours, and that we would remain where we were for a day, in order to give the riding and pack animals belonging to the Choctaws a chance to graze and rest. When this arrangement had been definitely agreed upon between the "high contracting parties." Big Drunk returned to his men, and in a little while they all rode up, and pitched their camp under some trees just outside the entrance to the open spot we occupied. They were a fine bold looking set of fellows, armed with rifles and pistols and judging from the number of pack animals that were loaded with their "plunder" were well provided with all the necessary equipments and provisions for a long sojourn at their trapping grounds. "Now," said Uncle Seth to us, "I don't care a snap of my finger fur all the Injins in the Comanche nation. I know these Choctaw fellers well, and thar ain't a better fightin' people on the face of the yearth, and then they's always been friendly to the white folks. I did feel a little oneasy tell we met up with them, it's a fact, fur we was ruther short handed to hold our own agin a big crowd even though we had Cudjo along with us."

As soon as we thought the Choctaws had fixed their camps, we concluded to make them a "social call" for the purpose of getting better acquainted with them, as they were to be our companions and allies until we reached their trapping grounds on the San Saba. Before we came they had already stretched their blanket tents, and built their fires. They received us very cordially, and Big Drunk, as master of ceremonies, did the honors, by presenting us formally to all his warriors. The Choctaws had killed a fat buffalo that day on the road, the choice pieces of which they had roasting before their fires, and they looked and smelt so appetizing we were easily prevailed upon to accept Big Drunk's invitation to "stay and take a bite with them." All of the Choctaws spoke English after a fashion, and while supper was being cooked, we all "fraternised" with them upon the most free and easy terms. The one I addressed myself to particularly seemed to be of a very communicative disposition, and voluntarily gave me a good deal of information about his domestic affairs, etc. He told me he had "tree wife, and plenty fat hog," that he "no like Comanche—belly bad Injin; kill him fader; that the Choctaw belly good flens white people—no fite 'em; that he had good medicine for snake bite and gib me litle piece when I want 'em." I thanked him for his kind offer, and told him I would call on him for the medicine when I got snake bit, but hoped there would be no necessity for doing so. "Maybe so no," he said, "but plenty rattle snake San Saba. Wot you call 'em, you name?" said he. "My name is Jack Dobell," said I. "Me name," said he, striking his breast, "is Tustenugge Hadjo, big Injin; kill Comanche heap; bimeby you come Choctaw nation, git plenty fat hog, two, tree wife and good name, no like 'em Yack Dobell." I thanked my new friend for his hospitable invitation, and told him, I would be glad to have a good name like Tustenugge Hadjo, and plenty of fat hog, but that I couldn't take two or three wives, as the white people were not allowed to have more than one at a time. "White people know heap ting," said he, "but big fool bout 'em wife. One wife no good, tree wife belly good, bring 'em water, make 'em moccasin, hoe 'em corn and cook 'em dinner."

Just then dinner or supper, whichever they called it, was ready and we were all asked to take our seats on the grass, around half a dozen spits stuck in the ground, on which the choice pieces of the buffalo had been roasted, and a large camp kettle, filled with "succotash" (a medley of stewed meat, beans, hominy and peppers). The dinner was cooked in very primitive style, but it was really excellent, and we gave no offence to our entertainers by declining to accept the choice bits that were pressed upon us, for according to Indian etiquette, it is considered the height of bad manners to refuse to eat as long as your host sees proper to force his good cheer upon you. Cudjo, it seems, had wormed himself somehow astonishingly into the good graces of the Choctaws, and they were particularly attentive to him. The consequence was that a great many tid-bits were pressed upon him during the repast. He tackled them manfully and worried them down, one after another, until there was no room left for anything else. "Mass Jack," said he to me in a whisper, as he ruefully eyed about a pound of greasy hump, which one of the Choctaws had just then handed him on the point of his butcher knife, "Mass Jack, what I gwying to do wid all dis bufferlo hump?" "You must eat it," I whispered, "every bit of it, for don't you see that fellow who gave it to you watching you like a hawk, and if you leave a piece of it, as big as your thumb nail, he'll be as mad as a hornet, and there's no telling what he may do; these Indians are mighty uncertain." "I know dey is," said Cudjo, "but I don't see any sense in dere gettin' mad just becase a feller can't eat as much as a elerphant." Just then, however, the Choctaw, who had given Cudjo the piece of hump, accidentally looked towards him, and he hastily began to worry it down, though evidently sorely against his inclination. At length, with great difficulty, he succeeded in disposing of the last morsel, but scarcely had he done so, when another grim warrior handed him a roasted rib about three feet long. "Oh! de Lord ob mercy, Mass Jack," said he, what I gwying to do wid all dis rib. I can't eat it, ef I hab to die de nex' minit fur it." "But you must," said I, in a whisper, "you might have got off alive if you hadn't eat the hump, but to refuse to eat fat buffalo rib when a Choctaw presents it to you, is the worst insult you could offer him, and your scalp would be gone before you could say Jack Robinson. You must eat it, if it kills you, for it is better to die eating buffalo rib, than to have your throat cut with the butcher knife that fellow's got in his hand." Thus urged, Cudjo made a faint effort at tackling the rib, but it was no use, nature could endure no more. He gazed with an expression of mingled satiety and disgust, first, at the rib and then at the grim warrior who had given it to him, as if debating in his mind which of the two evils to choose. He evidently thought the situation was a desperate one, but his inventive genius was equal to the emergency. Jumping up suddenly, he exclaimed: "Fore gracious, I believe de fire done cotch our tent. I see mighty big smoke ober dar," and saying this he went off at the top of his speed for camp. We sprang to our feet at once, thinking our tent had really caught on fire, but seeing no smoke nor flames in that direction we all took our seats again wondering (everybody except myself) at Cudjo's inexplicable conduct, and shortly afterwards we bade adieu to our Choctaw friends and returned to camp. We found Cudjo comfortably "quiled up" in his blanket at the foot of the live oak under which we had stretched our tent. "Why Cudjo," said Willie, "what in the world could have put it into your wooly head that our tent was on fire? we didn't see any smoke nor any other sign of a fire over this way." "Nur me nuther," said Cudjo, "but de fac' is, Mass Willie, I was 'bliged to git out'n dat scrape somehow. Mass Dobell tell me, if I didn't eat dat bufferlo rib de Injin gib me, he tuk my sculp sartin, an' I hadn't no whar to put 'em, for I was jess chock full up to de neck, an' den I make b'lieve de tent cotch fire, jess for 'scuse to git erway from dem Injin, an' I tell you what's de trufe, Mass Willie," continued Cudjo, "I ain't gwying ter eat wid dem agin. Dey ain't got no sense to want to kill a pusson, jess case he can't eat a whole bufferlo fur he dinner—dat's all foolishness." A sudden light broke upon all at this, and a general laugh went the rounds at Cudjo's expense. "Never mind, Cudjo," said Lawrence, "we'll ask these Choctaws to take dinner with us before long and then you can have your revenge by stuffing them until they holler ' 'nuff.' " "I'll do dat" said Cudjo, "but you better not ax 'em to dinner till you git two or tree fat bufferlo in camp, or may be so dere stomack will hold out longer'n our pervisions."

As the encampment of the Choctaws was close to the opening into our little prairie, Uncle Seth concluded we might trust to their watchfulness and the security of our position, and dispense with the usual guard for the night. "A good night's sleep on a scout," said Uncle Seth, "is wuth a leetle risk, pervidin' the Injin sign ain't too fresh and plentiful, but anyhow, I think we kin trust the Choctaws to keep a look-out for us this time." "It's three long hours yet till bed time," said Willie, "and I vote that Mr. Dobell spin us a yarn. He hasn't done his share lately for the entertainment of this select company." "All right, Willie," said I, "I am always willing to contribute my mite to anything on the tapis, 'pervidin' I can do so. But I have already told you about all my 'scapes and scrapes in Texas, and I shall have to go elsewhere for something new." "Well, let's have it, anyhow," said Willie, "we want a 'change of venue' by way of variety." "Then," said I, assuming a contemplative expression, and throwing myself into a theatrical pose, as well as I could upon the "chunk" that served me for a seat, "I believe, I will tell you of an incident that happened in Florida, just after I returned there from Texas." "I'll bet a roasted buffalo rib," said Willie, winking at Cudjo, "that there's a woman mixed up in it somehow." "No," said I, "you have missed the mark widely this time, for there is not the remotest allusion made to the 'sex' throughout the whole yarn,—the more's the pity, for you remember of course what the poet says:

"The world was sad, the garden was a wild,
And man, the hermit sighed, till woman smiled."

"Oh, yes," said Willie, "I remember something like it, but you have got the quotation all wrong—it should be

"The world was glad, the 'truck patch' fair and wide
And man, the hermit, smiled till woman sighed."

"Boys," said Uncle Seth, what's all that palaver 'bout gardens and sich got to do with Mr. Dobell's yarn? Ef Mr. Dobell knows of anybody bein' skulped by Injins or squeezed to death by a bar, or chawed up by javalinas, I hope he will tell it, and not go beatin' round the bush in sich a way." "I sit corrected," said I, resuming with some difficulty, my theatrical attitude on the "chunk" which was a very hard and knotty one, "and will tell my story without any further 'palaver.'"

"One day, not long after my return to Florida from Texas, I was sitting in my room, debating with myself, as to the best mode of killing some leisure time I had on my hands, when the post man came in with a letter for me. It was from B——, an old friend of mine, who had lately made a local habitation if not a name, at the frontier settlement of Manatee, inviting me to come down and stay a few weeks with him. In his letter, as an inducement for me to come, he expatiated largely on the abundance of game in his vicinity, bear, deer, turkeys, etc., to say nothing of alligators, manatees, (sea cows), etc. I considered this invitation as a most opportune event, and decided at once to accept it. The next morning I packed my dunnage, (consisting principally of hunting equipments, a couple of shirts, a pair of socks and five or six pounds of tobacco), in a large *respectable* looking trunk, and took the hack for St. Marks. There I was fortunate enough to find a schooner about to sail for "Tampa's snow white strand," and secured a berth on board of her. On my arrival at Tampa, I learned there was no communication between that place and Manatee, except by an occasional sail boat, and that probably I would have to wait several days for one. I therefore took up my quarters at the Metropolitan Hotel, an unfinished pine board shanty, fifteen feet long by twelve wide, in one corner of which I got a bunk fenced off from the rest of the room by a well worn saddle blanket. The Metropolitan could boast of a very respectable 'cuisine' as to fish and oysters, but only so so as to most other things and was a dead failure in biscuits and coffee. The cook, at my urgent request, furnished me before leaving with his receipt for making biscuits, and as I have never seen it in any of the standard 'cookery books,' I will give it here for the benefit of gourmands generally. It is very simple. 'Rec. Take one pound of flour (if musty, the better), one pound (a pint) of water, and one pound of salaratus. Mix to the consistency of putty and bake quickly in a very hot oven, so that the outside shall be burnt to a coal and the inside raw.' When well made according to this receipt, a piece the size of a pound weight should weigh a pound exactly. The Rec. for making coffee was still more simple and very economical. 'For a dozen people say, bring three gallons of water to a gentle simmer, and pour into it the grounds of several previous boilings. Serve up lukewarm in greasy cups with the addition of "long sweetening" at the discretion of the reveller.'

"In a couple of days I had seen everything in and around Tampa worth seeing, except that 'snow white strand,' which I could not find, though I searched diligently for it. I suppose it had been washed away by some unusually high tide. Time began to hang heavy on my hands and yet no boat came to my relief until late in the evening of my third day's sojourn at the 'Metropolitan.' But as I was listlessly returning to the hotel from a stroll I had taken along the beach, hoping thereby to aid the digestion of a biscuit I had eaten at dinner, I descried a boat coming up the bay before a 'spanking' breeze. I hurried to the landing and reached there just as she was made fast to the wharf. She proved to be one of those peculiar crafts called 'smacks,' which ply between the ports of Cuba and the Florida coast, and supply the inhabitants of the 'Ever faithful Isle' with fish and oysters. Going on board I inquired of a bronze-colored Dago (as the lower order of aquatic Cubans are called) who seemed from the way in which he ordered about the others, to be the boss of the craft, where the boat was bound. He gave me to understand in very disjointed English, that he was bound for Havana with a cargo of fish, but they would stop at Manatee on the way, and that he would sail early the next morning. I engaged passage at once, and the next morning I was on board betimes with my trunk, rifle and other 'contraptions.' In a little while afterwards we set sail down the bay with a six knot breeze following after us.

"Up to this time, not the slightest idea had entered my mind that I was running any risk in venturing alone on this Dago craft, but after we were fairly under way and I had leisure to scan closely the villainous countenances of the three Dagos composing the crew, I could not help thinking I might have found a 'healthier' place if I had searched as diligently for it as I did for that 'snow white strand.' But it was too late then to regret the step I had taken, and really beyond their sinister looks, I had seen nothing to cause me any uneasiness.

"About twelve o'clock, the Dago who officiated as steward on the boat, prepared dinner, which he sat out on a large sea chest abaft the main mast, and the one who appeared to have command of the other two, and who could speak a little broken English, invited me to take 'grub' with them. I took a seat by one of the platters on the chest, and whilst we were eating I endeavoured to engage the 'Captain' in conversation, but he seemed to be surly and unsociable, and after one or two fruitless attempts, I gave it up as a hopeless job. After dinner, I laid down on my cloak in the shade of the main sail, and tried to amuse myself watching a school of porpoises that were swimming about the boat. I had been listlessly reclining some time in this way, when the two Dagos who spoke no English took a seat near me and began to converse in a low tone in the Spanish language. Fortunately for me I had acquired quite a smattering of Spanish when among the Mexicans in Texas, and the idea occurred to me that perhaps it might be well enough to pay some attention to what these preposessing gentlemen were talking about. They spoke in such a low tone, however, that I could only catch a sentence now and then, but at length I heard one of them distinctly say: 'I wonder what this fellow is going to Manatee for?'

'Jose,' replied the other, (meaning the captain, I supposed), 'thinks he's got plenty of money, and that he is going to Manatee to buy land' (the land office for that section had just been opened). Then the one who had first spoken, said to the other: 'Don't speak so loud, he might hear us.' 'Well, if he does,' said the other, 'he won't know what we are talking about; none of the Americans here speak Spanish.' Thinks I, old fellow, you are slightly mistaken. I understand it well enough to know that you intend me some foul play. 'Well,' said one, 'I want my share of his money and to-night'—but just then the captain came by and they ceased talking. I had heard enough, however, to arouse my suspicions fully. I was satisfied these Dagos had planned some foul play towards me, and as one can readily imagine my reflections on the subject were anything but pleasant. I soon, however, came to the conclusion that there was but one course for me to pursue, and that was, whilst watching all their movements closely, not to let the Dagos perceive I had the slightest suspicion of their intentions.

"Just about sunset, we arrived opposite the mouth of the Manatee river, when, to my astonishment, instead of running into it, the Dagos lowered all sails, and let go the anchor half a mile or more outside in the open bay. This singular proceeding fully confirmed me in my suspicions that some rascally scheme had been planned to make way with me, as there was no reason why they should anchor for the night in the open bay, when the wind was perfectly fair to run into a secure harbor not a mile distant. I stepped up to the captain and asked him why he had anchored in the bay in place of running into the mouth of the Manatee. He turned away very abruptly from me, merely saying he was the captain of that boat, and that he would anchor where it suited him. All day there had been some indications that one of those terrible gales was brewing that sometimes devastate the coast of

Florida, and by this time 'a chiel might understan,' The De'il had business on his han'.' Heavy clouds were banking up around the horizon, the scud was flying rapidly overhead, although as yet but a moderate breeze was blowing below, and the sea fowls were screaming ominously as they winged their way towards the land. I again spoke to the captain, telling him we were certainly going to have a gale, and that it would be best to hoist sail and run into the mouth of the Manatee where we would have smooth water and a perfectly secure harbor. But he replied again, that he was captain of that boat, and 'that it was none of my business.'

"In a little while after we had anchored, supper was prepared and served on deck, and as soon as it was over the three Dagos went below. I was perfectly sure now, that the villains had concocted a scheme to murder me whilst I was asleep, but how to foil them was the question. I knew that I would have no chance to defend myself, with the odds so much against me, for either of the Dagos was my superior in physical strength. A dozen schemes for extricating myself from the scrape I was in flashed through my mind, in rapid succession, but none of them appeared feasible. However, I knew it was necessary that some plan of action should be determined upon and without delay, for I felt sure if I remained much longer on deck, the Dagos would suppose I had some suspicions of their designs, which would probably cause them to hurry up matters for my 'quietus.' I remembered, when I left the hotel at Tampa, I had put a brace of well loaded derringer pistols on top of everything else in my trunk, and I resolved, if possible, to get them, and then make my way as rapidly as I could to the deck again. This, I knew, would be a very 'risky' matter, for my trunk was in the cabin and locked, and I thought it more than probable if I attempted to unlock it, the Dagos would suspect I was after weapons of some kind, and spring upon me before I could get them. And yet it was very evident, the only chance for my life depended upon securing these pistols, and I determined at all hazzards to make the attempt. There were four berths in the little cabin, and as I descended the narrow and almost perpendicular steps of the companion way, I noticed that the Dagos had all turned into their berths, leaving one unoccupied for my *accommodation*. I suppose I came down rather unexpectedly to them, for when I descended the steps far enough to see into the cabin, I observed the Dago lying in the berth next to mine, hastily thrust a long Spanish dagger or stiletto under his pillow. This was not very encouraging, nevertheless I carried out my programme much more deliberately and coolly, than I thought it would be possible for me to do under the circumstances. My trunk was in the back part of the cabin close to a large sea chest, upon which a lamp was burning. On this chest also was an olla or earthern jar containing water, and one or two tin cups. As soon as I reached the cabin floor, I slowly pulled off my coat as if preparing to go to bed, and then leisurely walked up to the chest, dipped some water from the jar and drank it. I then stooped down close to my trunk and pretended I was untying my shoes, but all the while with one hand I was trying to put the key into the lock. I thought I never would find that key hole, though no doubt the time spent in searching for it seemed much longer than it really was, from the fact that I observed the Dago nearest me was watching my every movement intently with his coal black, snaky eyes. At last, however, I succeeded in unlocking the trunk, and throwing back the lid suddenly, I grasped both derringers, sprang quickly to the ladder and up to the deck, taking with me as I went an old fashioned cloth cloak which I had hung on one of the lower rounds. As I went up the ladder I gave a glance backwards and saw the three Dagos spring from their berths, each one with a dagger in his hand; but they were a little too late, for by the time they reached its foot, I had gained the deck and was safe from their clutches. The companion way (which was certainly a misnomer for it) was so narrow that only one person could possibly ascend it at a time, and I was confident I could kill two of the Dagos if they should attempt to follow me, with my pistols, and that probably, if the other should not be discouraged by the death of his comrades I would be able to brain him as he came up, with the tiller. I wrapped my cloak around me, (for by this time it had begun to rain and blow heavily), and took my seat on the deck, just abaft the entrance to the companion way, so that I could place the muzzle of a pistol against the head of any Dago who might venture up. When I found that I had fairly got them in their own trap, I felt as if a couple of hundred pounds had suddenly been lifted from my shoulders—such was the state of tension to which my nerves had been strung while down in that cabin. For several minutes after I had gained the deck, I heard the Dagos talking with each other, but in so low a tone, I could not understand what was said. In a little while however, they ceased talking, and, as I supposed, turned into their berths again. Still I never relaxed my vigilance, but watched the entrance to the companion way with the eyes of a hawk. An hour or more went by, and still I heard nothing from my friends below. At length a faint sound like the creaking of the rounds of the ladder attracted my attention, and I was satisfied one of the scoundrels was cautiously coming up. Presently, a black object slowly protruded above the deck, and cocking one of my pistols, I jammed it against the Dago's head, and was just on the point of pulling the trigger when he 'let go all holds' and tumbled backwards with a heavy 'thud' on the cabin floor. The fall was a very severe one, and I think the Dago was pretty badly hurt, for I heard him groaning for several minutes afterwards. I supposed he had ventured up for the purpose of ascertaining what I was about, and thinking it highly probable, no doubt, that I had got pistols out of my trunk, he was on the 'qui vive' as well as myself, and the instant he heard the click of the lock, he threw himself backwards just in time to prevent me from blowing out his brains.

"From that on the Dagos made no further attempt to come up, for they had found out I was armed and prepared to give them a warm reception—still I did not cease for a moment to keep a close watch on the entrance to the companion way through that long and dreary night. Towards daylight the wind blew a perfect hurricane, the rain came down at intervals in torrents, and vivid flashes of lightning occasionally lit up the lurid darkness, giving me glimpses of the seething and tumultuous waters around. The little vessel bobbed and pitched at her anchor in a fearful way, and every now and then a wave larger than usual would topple over her, completely deluging the deck. I fully expected every moment she would be swamped; but whatever happened, I was determined to keep the Dagos below. It seemed to me that day would never break, but at last, to my great joy, I saw a few faint streaks of light in the east, and soon afterwards the shore on the larboard was dimly visible. Just as I was congratulating myself upon my escape from the dangers of the past night, a huge wave struck the little vessel amidship, and rolled hissing and seething over the deck and I was only saved from being washed away by clinging tightly to the tiller. Undoubtedly the boat would have been swamped at her anchor, but fortunately, just then, the great strain upon the cable snapped it like a pack thread. She struggled to the surface again and then flew away like a frightened bird before the gale. Fortunately for me too, the wind was blowing directly towards the mouth of the Manatee river, and in a few moments the boat had safely passed through the breakers into the smooth water within the bar. At that time there was a large fishing station just at the mouth of the river, which gave employment to thirty or forty men. Seeing a boat come driving into the harbor before the gale under bare poles, many of them hastened down to the beach to ascertain what she was and whether or not there was any one on board of her. By the time the boat had reached the shore, quite a crowd of the fishermen had collected at the place and several of them sprang on deck as soon as she grounded. Until then, no one had seen me, as I was hidden from view by the projecting roof of the companion way. When they discovered me me one of them exclaimed: 'Hello! I say shipmate, are you the flying dutchman? Where are you from, and what do you mean by scudding about under bare poles in such a gale of wind?' In a few words I explained matters to them, telling them I was merely a passenger on the boat but that I had been compelled to keep the crew below all night to prevent them from murdering me. 'Yes,' said he, "we saw the boat come to anchor last evening in the bay and we all wondered why she did not run into the mouth of the river when it was plain a gale was brewing.' 'Well, tell them to come up,' said the one who had first spoken and who seemed to have control of the others, 'and let's have a squint at the bloody villains.' I thereupon called out in Spanish to the Dagos, down the companion way, and ordered them to come on deck at once. In a few moments they came up, one after the other, and a more cowed, sheepish looking trio I never beheld. As soon as they made their appearance on deck, and the fishermen discovered they were Dagos, a dozen or more seized them, and swore they would hang them to the first tree they could find. They had no friendly feelings towards them anyhow as a class, but looked upon them in the same light that the Californians do upon the 'heathen Chinee' —competitors in their trade and intruders on their own special fishing grounds. The Dagos were terribly frightened and begged me piteously not to let the men kill them. I told them they richly deserved hanging, as they well knew it was their intention to murder me, but as they had not succeeded, I would do what I could to save them. With much difficulty I prevailed upon the fishermen to spare their lives, but they sentenced them to receive fifty lashes apiece on their bare backs, and confiscated the smack and cargo. As there was no civil jurisdiction at that day on the Manatee, these men were 'a law unto themselves' and the sentence was forthwith carried into effect. The Dagos were well flogged, and then turned loose to make their way back to Cuba as best they could, and that," said I, "is the end of my Dago yarn."

"And a very good yarn it is," said Willie, encouragingly, "but if there was only something in it about a woman, and dying of love and broken hearts and 'congenial souls,' etc., it would have been more interesting of course. Just think, how much better it would have been, if one of the Dagos had had a pretty daughter on board, and she had fallen in love with you at first sight, warned you of the plot to murder you, stole the small boat after dark and rowed you safely to the land."

"Yes, Willie," said I, "it would, but the yarn, such as it is, is a true one, and as there was no small boat on the smack, and none of those ill favored Dagos, had a pretty daughter on board (or elsewhere, I'm sure), and especially if I had stated that she had fallen in love with me, at first sight, it would have thrown discredit upon the whole story." "Yes," said Willie naively, as he took a good look at my homely phiz, "I reckon you are right."

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE MOVE AGAIN—HENRY AND WILLIE GO ON A BUFFALO CHASE WITH THE CHOCTAWS—LAWRENCE AND I EXPLORE THE FRIO CANON A SHORT DISTANCE—FIND AND EXAMINE A SINGULAR CAVE—VISIT THE CHOCTAW CAMP AND WITNESS THE "BUFFALO" AND OTHER DANCES—INDIAN ROCK TOWER—UNCLE SETH TAKES A LONG POP AT A BUCK—LAWRENCE AND I GO OUT "PROSPECTING" AND FIND A HUGE NUGGET—MR. PITT'S GREEN-HORN YARN.

At sun rise the next morning we were all roused up by Uncle Seth. "Come, boys," said he, "turn out and git everything ready fur movin.' I don't want to keep the Injins waitin' on us." We all jumped up at the summons, re-staked our horses on fresh grass, and then proceeded to pack our goods and chattels, except such as were needed for breakfast. This was quickly despatched, and saddling our animals we mounted and rode out to the encampment of our Indian allies. They were just ready to move as we came up, and as Uncle Seth said they knew the country better than he did, he requested Big Drunk to take the lead with his men. Big Drunk accordingly led the way with his warriors in single file, and we followed them in the same order, the "tout ensemble" as Mr. Pitt said, presenting quite a formidable and warlike appearance. Our route was up the Frio, keeping close along the river, except occasionally when we were compelled to diverge by abrupt hills or dense chapparals. We passed a number of pretty little valleys on the way, now no doubt the abode of many a hardy frontiersman, but at that time probably the foot of a white man had never before pressed their virgin soil. We had at length reached the unknown, unexplored wilderness. In one of these little valleys, where we halted a few moments to adjust the pack on the mule, Willie picked up several garnets, a species of gem of no great value I believe, but very beautiful and brilliant when cut and polished. About midday we came to the southern end of the canyon, down which the Frio finds its way for nearly forty miles, through the rugged range of high hills on the upper or northern edge of which it takes its rise. Here it was determined to pitch camp, in order that spies might be sent forward to reconoitre the canyon before we entered it, and thus guard ourselves against the danger of an ambuscade. Two of Big Drunk's warriors were despatched on this mission, with instructions to go some miles up the canyon and to notice particularly if there was any sign indicating that any large party of Indians had recently passed through it. The two spies were soon ready for their expedition, and leaving their horses in charge of the other Indians, they started on foot up the canyon. As soon as they left, we proceeded to pitch our tents near the entrance where there was a fine bold spring and plenty of grass for the animals. A mile or so back from where we had pitched camp, we had crossed a large buffalo trail, very recently made, and Big Drunk selected five or six of his best hunters to go with him in search of the game. At the earnest request of Henry and Willie, who were anxious to participate in the chase, Uncle Seth permitted them to accompany Big Drunk and his party, but with strict injunctions that on no account were they to leave their Choctaw friends. "Don't be flaid," said Big Drunk, "I keep dem boy safe wid me."

After we had pitched the tent and staked the horses, Lawrence and I took our guns and strolled up the canon to see what discoveries we could make. We had no fear of hostile Indians as we knew our spies were ahead of us in the canon, and our encampment was immediately at the entrance, so that we were well guarded on the two quarters by which alone an enemy could approach. We found the pass quite wide and accessible for a short distance, but after going up it perhaps half a mile, it narrowed to a mere gulch or canon not more than a hundred and fifty yards in width where it was hemmed in on both sides by almost impassible walls of rock several hundred feet high. Down these rocky walls a streamlet here and there poured its limpid waters from ledge to ledge, until they finally mingled with the no less clear and sparkling waters of the Frio. Just at the narrowest point of the pass, we observed the mouth of a cave forty or fifty feet above the bed of the river. We clambered up to this cave with some difficulty and peeped into it, but it was so dark within we could see nothing distinctly. "I have a great curiosity," said Lawrence, "to examine the interior of this cave, and I propose we do so." "All right," said I, "we can easily make a torch of dry cedar" (of which there was an abundance in the vicinity). We went to work with our butcher knives, split up a quantity of dry cedar limbs, which we bound together with strips of bear grass. Then entering the mouth of the cave, which was high enough for one to walk erect, we ignited some tinder and soon had our torch in a blaze. Looking around we ascertained that we were in a large vaulted room fifteen or twenty feet high and between thirty and forty in width, but which extended back farther than we could see by the light of our torch. We had gone but a few feet from the entrance when Lawreuce stumbled over some object and holding his torch closely to it, we saw that it was the skull of a human being. Upon further examination we found that the floor of this cave was strewn with the bones of human beings mingled with those of the deer, bear and other wild animals and also the decayed remnants of elk and moose horns. The moose horns must have been brought there from a great distance as the animal was not a native of Texas. Lawrence picked up among the debris, several of the most delicately cut obsidian spear and arrow heads I had ever seen, and I believe he sent them subsequently to the Smithsonian Institute. We were prevented from making as complete an examination of the cave as we wished, by the bats. Roused from their slumbers by the light of our torch, they thronged about it like gigantic moths, and at length fairly put it out with the flapping of their wings. We were compelled to grope our way to the entrance, from whence we descended to the trail leading along the canon. We continued our explorations a mile or so farther, but finding nothing of particular interest we retraced our steps to camp and got there just as Cudjo was dishing up supper. Willie and Henry had just returned from the buffalo hunt, and the former gave us a glowing description of the exciting chase they had after the buffalo, over hills and gulches and prairies—how they at last came up with him in spite of all their efforts to escape and opened a fusillade upon them with guns and pistols—how Henry had come very near being umhorsed by an old bull, which had been wounded, and which made a sudden and unexpected charge upon him, and how he, Willie, had killed a yearling by a shot from his derringer. "I tell you what, boys," continued Willie, after stopping a moment to catch his breath, "I wouldn't have missed seeing this buffalo chase for a great deal. It 'filled the bill' according to my notions exactly. First the wild scamper over hill and valley which stirs a fellow up from head to heel—then the Indians yelling and charging here and there upon their foaming steeds, the popping of guns and pistols, the bellowing of bulls, the rush, the clattering of horse's hoofs, and occasionally the headlong tumble to the ground of some 'old monarch of the prairies,' formed a 'tout ensemble,' as Mr. Pitt would say, that would have made the blood tingle in the veins of a fellow who had had the 'fever'n ager' for twelve months. Oh, it was glorious." "Yes," said Henry, "that's all very fine, but you don't say a word about the old bull you charged upon so brashly, that turned the tables upon you and chased you for more than a quarter of a mile in sight of the whole crowd." "That's so," replied Willie, getting slightly red in the face, "I did run from him I admit, but then you see both of my pistols were empty, and—and, the old rascal looked so vicious with his blood-shot eyes and shaggy mane, I—I would have run if both my pistols had been loaded. There now, are you satisfied?" "Oh yes," said Henry, "an honest confession is good for the soul, and that's all I could ask." "Well, Willie," said Mr. Pitt, who had stayed in camp all the evening with Uncle Seth and Cudjo, "I have no doubt you have all had a fine time,--Lawrence and Mr. Dobell in exploring the wonderful cave they found, and Henry and yourself on the buffalo chase. Still I don't believe you have enjoyed yourselves any more than Uncle Seth, Cudjo and I have in camp here. After I had mended my saddle rigging, Cudjo fixed us up a nice snack, Uncle Seth told us a good yarn, and we then spread our blankets on the grass, and had a quiet, comfortable snooze. "We didn't envy them at all, did we Cudjo," said Mr. Pitt, to that redoubtable warrior.

"Dat we didn't," said Cudjo, "long's a feller got nuffin' to do but eat and den go to sleep tell he gits hongry agin, I tink he's 'bout as well off as anybody." "Ah, Cudjo," said Willlie, "I see very plainly we shall never be able to make a frontiersman of you; and it isn't to be wondered at either," he continued, "for you see, Cudjo, you come of a race that have never been noted for their enterprise and energy. If you were all set free to-morrow, ninety-nine out of a hundred, twenty years from now, would still be what you are, 'hewers of wood, and drawers of water, for the energetic go ahead Saxon." "I don't know nuffin' at all 'bout all dat," said Cudjo, "but de Saxoms welcome to go ahead and break he neck too, runnin arter bufferlo ebery day ef he wants to, pervidin' Cudjo's got plenty to eat, an a good warm place to quile up in wen he's sleepy." "Cudjo wants his vittels here below," said Mr. Pitt, "and wants those vittels warm, and I rather think his view of the question is the most philosophical after all, and the fact is, boys," continued Mr. Pitt, who managed by a little judicious flattery to get more out of Cudjo than anybody else, "the fact is, boys, I don't believe any of you ever get much the advantage in argufying with Cudjo. I notice he generally holds his own pretty well, and, by the by, Cudjo," Mr. Pitt added, "you mustn't forget to grease my boots to-night for they are as hard as pot metal."

During the evening Big Drunk called at our camp, and invited us to come over after supper, and see the buffalo dance they were going to have in honor of the successful hunt they had made. Uncle Seth declined the invitation on the plea that he had to "tinker" the triggers of his rifle, which had somehow got out of order, but he said he reckoned the boys would like to see the dance, and if we wanted to go, that he would keep camp till we come back. Of course we were all anxioue to witness the proceedings, and willingly accepted Big Drunk's invitation, with the exception of Cudjo, who I think was rather apprehensive that another surfeit of buffalo ribs was impending. However, his curiosity finally got the better of his apprehensions, and he concluded to go with us.

Entering the Choctaw camp, we found Big Drunk and his men busily engaged in adorning themselves for the dance, painting their faces and bodies (which were naked to the waist) with white and black pigments in the most grotesque manner. The styles of some of their head dresses too were unique, and would have made the "girl of the period" hide her diminished head, chignon and all, from mere shame and envy. We took our seats upon some buffalo skins that were spread upon the grass for our accommodation, and quietly waited for the ball to begin. A large fire of dry wood was built in the centre of a level plat of ground, from which every stone and stick that might interfere with the movements of the dancers, had been carefully cleared away. Big Drunk opened the ball by entering this arena and commencing to dance with a slow up and down movement, to which a lugubrious ditty, composed of short sylables, jerked out spasmodically and the rattling of a gourd partly filled with gravel, formed an appropriate accompaniment. Presently, another warrior joined Big Drunk, and then another, and another, until all were dancing in the same monotonous manner. When all were collected in the arena, they joined hands, and forming a circle around the fire the regular dance began, of which the previous "solo" dances seemed to have been only a kind of prelude. During the dance the Indians spoke or rather sang in their own language, and of course we could not understand what was said, but we readily conjectured from their gestures and movements, that the figures were intended to represent in pantomime, all that takes place on a buffalo chase—the helter skelter run after the game; the firing of guns; the bellowing of the bulls and the headlong fall of those fatally pierced by bullets, etc., the whole winding up by their marching around in single file, each one in a stooping position as though he were heavily laden with the weight of the meat he was bringing back from the successful chase. After the buffalo dance several other dances were gone through with, the bear dance, the scalp dance, the torture dance, etc. In the latter, which I suppose was the usual one danced at the Indian "auto da fes" or burnings at the stake, there was so much violent gesticulation, such fiendish yells and horrible contortions of the countenance, that Cudjo was frightened, and got up from his seat evidently with the intention of making tracks for camp, but Mr. Pitt noticed the movement, and stopped him by telling him, that if he left the ground before the ceremonies were ended, the Indians would regard it as a mortal affront, and probably wind up the performances with a genuine "torture dance" in which he would figure conspicuously. Mr. Pitt's remonstrance had the desired effect, and Cudjo resumed his seat again, but it was very apparent he was sick of the "show" and wished himself safely back at home.

As soon as the last dance was ended, Mr. Pitt concluded he would have a little fun out of Cudjo, so he stepped up to Big Drunk, and after giving him to understand that we were all highly pleased with their dances, he told him we were desirous of contributing something towards the entertainments of the evening and if he wished it, we would get Cudjo to "pat Juba" which Mr. Pitt said, was the war dance of Congo, his native land. "Me like see 'em belly weil," said Big Drunk," and forthwith he ranged his warriors around the fire, who patiently waited for Cudjo to make his appearance in the ring. Mr. Pitt then went to Cudjo and told him the Indians wanted to see him pat Juba, as they had been told he could not be beat at it by any darkey in the settlements. "Deed, Mass Pitt," said Cudjo, "I don't want to pat Juba fur all dem wile Injins. I'd rather be 'scused to-night, and you kin tell 'em I got de reumatiz mity bad in my off laig." "Oh, that will never do, Cudjo," said Mr. Pitt, "the Indians have danced several times for us, and if you refuse to dance for them when they ask you, they will certainly be highly affronted and there's no telling what they may do." "Drat dese Injins," said Cudjo, "I don't want nuffin' more to do wid 'em. Dey's altogeder too techy for me. Ef you don't eat wid 'em tell you bust, dey's 'fronted, an ef you don't dance when dey gin the word, dey wants ter take your sculp. I'm afeared all de time I'm wid 'em I'll do suffiin' or nuder dey don't like, afore I knows it, and den I 'spose off go my sculp. Drat 'em, it's sculp, sculp, wid 'em from mornin' tell night." "Yes, that's so," said Mr. Pitt, "but the only thing to do now is, to get out of the scrape the best way you can, and I'm pretty sure if you don't dance, and dance your very best at that, that in less than ten minutes you will have no more wool on the top of your head than you have in the palm of your hand." Thus urged, Cudjo reluctantly entered the ring and began to pat Juba, all the while eyeing the surrounding warriors closely, to see what effect his performances were having upon them. But Indians are not at all demonstrative and seldom exhibit any signs of approbation, even when highly pleased, and although Cudjo put in all his fancy touches, such as had often won him unbounded applause from many a select crowd of darkies, the Indians still looked on as apathetically and grimly as if they had fully made up their minds to scalp the dancer the moment the "jig was up." Cudjo, no doubt, finally came to this conclusion himself, and that his only chance to save his scalp was to "do the thing up brown" and his efforts to give satisfaction to the glum warriors were almost superhuman. He beat the ground as he danced with the palm of one of his hands, and at the same time, the top of his head with the other, then the soles of his feet and the calves of his legs (or rather the places where the calves should have been, for what little he had of those appendages was on the wrong side) and jumped up and down and around with such rapidity and vigor, that the perspiration rolled off his forehead in drops as big as mustang grapes. At last, however, seeing no signs of approval on the countenances of the stolid warriors, and completely exhausted by his violent efforts, Cudjo dropped on the ground in utter despair, and resigned himself, as he supposed, to his inevitable fate. But the love of life was still strong within him, and seeing two or three of the warriors advancing towards him, his dread of being scalped, gave him renewed strength, and springing suddenly to his feet, he darted off at the top of his speed in the direction of our camp and was quickly lost to view in the surrounding gloom.

The Indians seemed somewhat astonished at this "finale" of Cudjo's national dance, but eventually I think they came to the conclusion that his sudden exit was merely the usual winding up. I am rather inclined to believe, however, that Big Drunk (who was a pretty shrewd fellow) had some suspicions of the true state of the case, for I heard him say to Mr. Pitt when Cudjo abandoned the field so hastily, "Ah, hah ! tent done cotch fire agin, may be so."

Shortly after Cudjo left, we bid our friends good night, and returned to our own camp. We found Cudjo coiled up in his blanket and fast asleep before the fire. Uncle Seth laughed heartily when we told him of Cudjo's performances at the dance and of his sudden retreat from the field. "Niggers," said he, looking rather contemptuously towards the unconscious Cudjo, "Niggers always puts me in mind of children, one minit they's cryin, fit to break their hearts, and the next they's laughin' so you kin hear 'em a mile off—pervidin' the wind's right. But no matter ef they's scared out'n their five senses, or hongry or sufferin' with the jumpin' tooth-ache, just gin 'em a chance to quile up in a blanket with their heads to the fire, and they's fast asleep afore you kin turn roun'. They say," continued Uncle Seth, "that Adam and Eve was the forbears of all the people in the world, and I s'pose i'ts a fact, fur it's down in the Bible, but they has sartinly had a hard road to travel somehow, or how is it they come by their black skin and wooly heads and skulls thick as a bufferlos—that's what I want to know?" "Scientists contend," said Mr. Pitt, "that their black skin, wooly heads, etc., are due to their long residence in hot or tropical countries." "May be so," said Uncle Seth, but the wooliest animules I've ever seed, were in cold countries; and though I wouldn't ventur to dispute their word, fur you see I hain't no book larnin', the fust time you meet up with any of them sientisters I wish you'd ax 'em fur me, what's the reason the Injins in South Ameriky 'long the Amerson ain't black and wooly headed, and if the niggers will git white agin, when they've lived as long in cold countries as they have in hot." Before Mr. Pitt could bring his "scientific authorities" to bear on this knotty question, Uncle Seth had "quiled" himself in his blanket, and we all soon followed his example.

The next morning just after we had finished breakfast, the two Indian spies returned to camp, and they reported they had gone fifteen or twenty miles up the canyon, and had found no recent Indian sign any where in it. "I no like Comanche set trap fur me," said Big Drunk, "but all right now and purty soon we go." When the two spies had stowed away about five pounds of buffalo meat apiece, and rested a long while after their long tramp, we saddled and mounted our horses, and proceeded towards the entrance of the canyon. A mile or so beyond the cave Lawrence and I had explored, upon the apex of a high peak overlooking all the surrounding hills, we observed what we supposed to be an Indian watching the advance of our party. Uncle Seth told us, however, it was a small pillar built of rocks by the Indians, but for what purpose he could not say. He told us he had frequently seen similar ones in his travels through the mountainous regions of Texas. The farther we went up the canyon, the wilder and more rugged became the scenery that presented itself to our view. The canyon in most places narrowed to a mere gulch, scarcely wide enough to give passage to the diminished stream of the Frio, through the clear shallow waters of which we often took our way in preference to the rocky trail along the banks. Just as we entered a little valley into which the canyon at that point widened out, Big Drunk called Uncle Seth's attention to a large buck standing on the very verge of a bluff, three or four hundred feet high, and asked him if he thought he could bring him down with his rifle. It was perhaps four hundred yards from where we were to where the buck was standing, and Uncle Seth told him it was a mighty long shot but if he would halt his men, he would try what he could do. Big Drunk thereupon ordered his men to stop, and Uncle Seth dismounted, advanced a few paces to the front where there was a small mesquite tree growing, on one of the lower branches of which he rested his rifle. Taking deliberate aim and elevating his sight a foot or more above the buck, he fired. At the report of the gun, the buck sprang beyond the edge of the bluff and rolled down its almost vertical face into the trail ahead of us. The Choctaws were much astonished when they saw the buck fall, and manifested their admiration of Uncle Seth's skill with the rifle, by various exclamations or grunts rather, but which it is impossible to express by written language. In fact, we were as much astonished as the Choctaws at the result of such a long shot, for in those days of old fashioned fire arms, the rifle could not be depended upon to kill at a greater distance than one hundred and fifty or at the most two hundred yards. But now with the improved Henry, Sharps and Winchester rifles, such a feat as the killing of a deer at the distance of four hundred or even six hundred yards would not be regarded as at all extraordinary.

The trail we were traveling was exceedingly rough and broken in many places, and the consequence was we made but slow progress. By the usual time for encamping, Big Drunk told us we were not quite half way through the canyon. At that point the Frio forked, one branch heading up in a north-easterly and the other in a north-westerly direction. We pitched our camp just below the junction of the two streams where the canyon widened out to a valley of some size. Many groves of Pecan, elm and oak trees dotted its surface, giving it the appearance of ornamented grounds.

Rugged, rocky hills four or five hundred feet high, thickly covered in most places with a stunted growth of cedar and other dwarfish shrubs, everywhere seemed to shut in this secluded valley with apparently impassible barriers. Near the grove of pecan trees in which we had pitched our camp, we found a number of huge pine logs, some of them fully sixty feet in length; all of them converted by time into solid pitch pine or "light 'ud" as the Georgia Crackers call it. There were no pine trees growing in the vicinity, and Uncle Seth said he had never seen one west of the San Antonio river. We could not conjecture from whence they had come unless they had been brought down by floods from forests that existed on the branches of the Frio. But, if there were any, they must have been high up on the eastern branch, for on the west fork, which we afterwards followed to its head, we saw none. We questioned Big Drunk on the subject, and he told us he had never seen a pine tree before any where in that region. He said he had traveled up the eastern branch of the Frio, some years previously when trapping for beaver, and that if there had been any pine groves upon it he certainly would have noticed them. Big Drunk also told us in the course of the "talk" we had with him on this occasion, that there was a tradition among the Indians that gold had been found by the Spaniards in large quantities, at or near the junction of the two branches of the Frio. Lawrence and I, on hearing this, concluded we would do a little "prospecting" in the vicinity, and as soon as the tent was pitched, we got a tin basin for "panning out" and went to where the two forks of the Frio came together, four or five hundred yards above our camp. Selecting an "auriferous" looking spot near the water, where there were the usual concomitant, of gold, such as quartz, granite and black sand, we went to work in regular miner fashion and "panned out" a dozen or more pecks of earth—but not a color could we find.

Abandoning all hopes of finding any nuggets, we started back to camp, but on the way I concluded to make one more trial before giving it up. Filling the basin with sand and earth, I immersed it in the clear water of the Frio, and washed the contents carefully until nothing was left in the pan except a handful of blank sand, among which I discovered a shining particle about the size of a pin head, which after a minute examination we were satisfied was gold. The embryo nugget was worth perhaps about ten cents, and carefully wrapping it in a piece of paper, we carried it to camp and triumphantly exhibited our treasure to the admiring gaze of our companions. But Willie, in his eagerness to get a good look at the nugget, gave the paper containing it a tilt, and it rolled out upon the ground, and notwithstanding we searched for it diligently we were unable to find it. I mention this incident because, although, I had often heard of specimens of gold being found in Texas, that was the first and last time I ever saw one myself. Taking into consideration, however, the finding of this particle of gold at the very locality, where, according to Indian tradition, the precious metal had been found in abundance by the Spaniards, I think it possible that some day or other the truth of the tradition may be verified.

Big Drunk had told us our route wonld be up the western branch of the Frio, as he said the trail up the eastern one was only practicable for men on foot. Whilst prospecting near the junction of the two streams, Lawrence and I had cast our eyes towards the wild gorges of the canyon, through which the eastern branch of the Frio poured its waters, and the misty outlines of the rugged hills in the distance and we were exceedingly anxious to explore the mysteries of this unknown region. The fates proved propitious to us and we were enabled partially to gratify our wishes in this respect. On our return te camp, we found that Uncle Seth and Big Drunk had concluded it would be best for us to remain where we were the next day in order to give our animals a chance to rest and recruit themselves on the luxuriant grass in the vicinity before we ventured out on the great plains beyond the head of the Frio, where Big Drunk said the grazing was scanty, and water to be had only at certain localities, which were "few and far between." As soon as Lawrence and I understood that this arrangement had been agreed upon by the "high contracting parties," Uncle Seth and Big Drunk, we resolved to spend the next day in exploring the valley or rather the canyon of the eastern branch of the Frio, at least as far as we could in such a limited time. Mr. Pitt said he would go with us, and both Henry and Willie wished to do so too, but Uncle Seth put his veto on that, for he said we would have to travel on foot, and that they were too young to undergo the fatigues of such a tramp; and besides he said the Choctaws were going to drive the canyon the next day for deer, and he wanted Henry and Willie to help, in order that we might come in for a share of the meat. With the prospect of a big hunt the next day, with the Choctaws, Willie and Henry did not insist on going with us.

After supper had been dispatched and we were all comfortably seated around the fire, which Cudjo occasionally replenished with pieces of fat pine, Willie called on Mr. Pitt for a yarn. "Come, Mr. Pitt," said he, "it's your turn again to give us a yarn, but please spin us one with a woman in it. Mr. Dobell's Dago story, was very good, but it lacked that sort of seasoning." "All right, Willie," said Mr. Pitt, "I was just on the eve of volunteering to spin you one, in which a pretty girl figures prominently, (but I warn you beforehand that she is none of your lackadaisical, sentimental kind), and I cannot preface my yarn more appropriately than by those well known lines:

'Oh woman, in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy and hard to please;
When pain and anguish wring the brow
A ministering angel thou."

"A very good preface," said Willie, "but like Mr. Dobell you don't quote correctly. The lines should be:

Oh, woman, in our hours of ease,
You'll hardly give us bread and cheese,
When pains of hunger gnaw the b——ly,
You pamper us on cakes and jelly."

"Look a here, boys," said Uncle Seth, "ef you don't intend to do nothin' but sing 'song ballads' all night, say so, and I'll turn in. I don't go high on that sort of thing, no how." "I stand corrected," said Mr. Pitt, and will proceed at once without further preface to relate what I call my 'green horn yarn.' A good many years ago, I was clerking for a large mercantile house in Louisville, Ky. They wished for certain reasons to obtain information in regard to trade with the colonies of Texas and the adjoining Mexican states, and though I was not yet out of my 'teens,' and as green as a cut seed water-melon, the firm concluded to employ me as their agent to attend to the business. At that time (several years before the colonies rebelled against Mexico), the American settlements in Texas were confined to a narrow strip of country, comparatively bordering the gulf, and the only way of getting from one of these settlements to another was on horseback. Well, you see boys," said Mr. Pitt, as he gently twisted his moustache between his forefinger and thumb, "in my youthful days it was the unanimous opinion of my friends (especially my female ones) that I was quite an Adonis as to looks, and with this opinion it is hardly necessary to say, my own fully coincided. The natural result of this state of things was, that I 'evolved' as the scientists say, from a monad into the most conceited coxcomb imaginable. I thought that every girl who showed me the slightest civility was a victim to my 'taking ways' and good looks, and that I only had to say the word to bring about an unconditional surrender. It is necessary I should make this humiliating confession in order that you may fully understand my story. One hot summer day, while traveling from one settlement to another, I became very thirsty, and went to a house a short distance from the road to get a drink. I dismounted at the gate, hitched my horse to the fence, and walked in. A good looking buxom country lass was seated on the ‘stoop’ and stepping up to her, I bowed in my most facinating style, and asked her if she would be kind enough to give me a drink of water. ‘Oh, sartainly,’ said she, ‘take a cheer and I’ll send to the spring for a bucket of fresh.’ I took a seat, and the young lady called to a little negro boy, who was making dirt pies in the yard, and told him to take the bucket and run to the spring. ‘Run now, and make haste back, Jake,’ said she, ‘for I reckon the gentleman’s very dry.’ Jake came in, seized the pail and started for the spring, and the young lady again took her seat. ‘She is decidedly pretty,’ said I to myself, as I gazed admiringly at her rosy cheeks, bright eyes and buxom form, evidently too an unsophisticated country girl, a child of nature, and I must condecend to a little flirtation with her if for no other purpose than to show her whot a vast difference there is between her clod hopping beaux, and a city bred young gentleman. I noticed when I came in that she was reading some book (which she still held in her hand) and hitching my chair a little closer to her, I said: ‘You seem to be very much interested in that book you have there, probably,’ said I, ‘it’s the “Sorrows of Werter” or the “Pilgrims of the Rhine.”’ ‘The what?’ said she, ‘Great Jerusalim! who ever hearn tell of sich books. Ef they is raily sich, I’m at the fust of it—though I come to think of it I have seed the “Pilgrim’s Progress.”—This book is the “Westring Songster.”’ ‘Ah, yes,’ said I, ‘I’ve read it—some very pretty songs in it, and I would like to know,’ said I, hitching my chair a little closer,’ which of them all is your favorite song.’ ‘Well,’ said she, ‘I dunno adzactly, but I believe I like “Roll on silvery moon, guide the traveler on his way'' better'n any of them—but you needn't take that as a hint to be going,' and she smiled mischeivously as she said this and in a way that didn't seem altogether suitable for an unsophisticated country girl. Thinks I, this 'child of nature' is not as guileless by half as I supposed, and notwithstanding my assurance and self-complacency, her reply disconcerted me no little, and I was glad that Jake at that moment got back from the spring, and made a diversion in my favor. 'Jake,' said she hand the gentleman a ''kokernut.'' Have some more,' said she, when I had drained the 'kokernut.' 'No, thank you,' said I, and Jake replaced the dipper in the pail, and went out to finish a dirt pie that was lacking an upper crust.

"I began my approaches cautiously once more by introducing several ordinary topics of conversation such as the weather, the crops, etc. She listened to all I had to say complacently, and I thought with increasing interest, (smiling pleasantly all the while and showing a set of beautiful white teeth) until at last I was confident I had made my usual favorable impression and that I might venture on subjects not quite so commonplace and formal. So edging my chair close enough this time to let one of my hands fall accidentally as it were upon one of hers, and looking tenderly at her, I said to her confidingly, that I would like to have her opinion on a certain matter. 'Well blab it out,' said she, 'and don't set there wallin' up the whites of your eyes like a sick kitten,' and saying this she jerked her hand away from mine. This wasn't very encouraging, but I had so much faith in my fascination I determined to go through with my programme. 'Well,' said I, 'suppose you were a judge, and a young gentleman was tried before you for kissing a beautiful young lady, one with rosy cheeks, red lips and bright blue eyes just like yours, and he was to plead that he couldn't help it, though he did his level best, would you be so hard-hearted as to send him to the penitentiary?' and I looked up at her with a beseeching expression of countenance. 'Well, I dunno,' said she, 'if he was a raal good looking young feller, and he could prove his breath didn't smell of ingons nor bal' face whiskey when he did it, I dunno ef I would come down pertickerly brash on him.' 'Then,' said I, 'I'll take the chances. I'm not much on looks I know, but at any rate my breath don't smell of onions nor bald face whiskey,' and I leant over suddenly and gave her cheek a hearty smack.

"For a moment or so she sat still and never said a word, but it was only the deceitful calm before the storm. Then she got up deliberately, went to the edge of the porch and called to Jake. 'Jake,' said she, 'run right down to the 'tater patch, and tell pop there's a gentleman here wants to see him. Tell him to come quick and bring his gun along with him, for the hawk is after the chickens agin.' Jake scooted I thought with needless haste considering I had no particular business to transact with pop, and the young lady returned quietly to her seat—though I could see by the way she bit her lips and from the flashing of her eyes that she was as mad as a hornet. Thinks I, if she is a 'chip of the old block' it will be best for me not to wait until the 'old block' puts in an appearance, so I got up and bidding her good day I started to leave. 'Oh, don't go yit,' said she, 'pop'll be here terreckly and I know he'll be mity glad to see you.' 'Thank you,' said I, 'I'll call again when I've more time, but it's getting late now and I've a good way to travel yet,' and I again started to leave. 'Oh, do wait for pop,' said she, I know he'll be powerful glad to see you,' and she suddenly sprang up, seized one of my hands in both of hers, and held it fast, trying at the same time to smile as sweetly as she had done before the 'little unpleasantness' occurred between us—but it was a dead failure, for her white teeth gleamed like a she hyenas, and there was a wicked expression in her blue eyes that belied the tender and pleading look she gave me. Now here was a dilemma out of which I could see no chance for an escape. I knew I could tear myself loose from her grasp by 'main force and brutality,' but the idea of doing so was not to be entertained for a moment. I would run any risk I thought—brave even an angry pop rather than retreat so ungallantly from the field. Just then, however, I happened to turn my eyes in the direction of the 'tater patch' and I saw pop about two hundred yards off coming towards the house with his gun on his shoulder. My courage like Bob Acres, and my gallantry too, at the sight of pop, oozed out of my finger ends notwithstanding the young lady grasped them so tightly, and I made a violent effort to liberate myself; but these robust country girls are not like effeminate city belles, and she 'held on to the willows' with astonishing vigor, and all the time that terrible pop of hers, was nearing the house rapidly. Scarcely knowing what I was about, in the desperation of the moment, I exclaimed, 'unhand me, villain,' and giving a sudden and violent jerk, I tore loose from the muscular siren, and made tracks swiftly for my horse. 'Never mind,' she screamed after me, 'pop'll git you yet, you sneaking, cowardly coyote, see if he don't—I'll make him foller you to Jeriko, and he'll fill your hide so full of holes it won't hold shucks.'

"Scarcely had I unfastened my bridle and leaped into the saddle (and it didn't take me long to do both), when pop reached the house, and after a word or two with that vixen daughter of his, he started towards me, beckoning at the same time to stop. Ordinarily I am of a sociable disposition, but just then I had no time for 'chit-chat'—all I wanted was to be 'over the hills and far away' with a full moon 'to guide the traveler on his way,' and (thanks to a pretty good 'chunk of a pony' and a rank pair of Mexican spurs) I was *there* in less than ten minutes.

"When I had placed a safe distance as I supposed, between Pop and myself, I checked up my horse and rode on more leisurely until I came to the settlement of B——. By the time I got there, the sun was getting quite low, and as I was both tired and hungry, I concluded to stop there, although I had some misgivings that pop might follow me. A considerable boom seemed to have struck the settlement at B——, for in addition to a blacksmith shop, a grocery and two saloons, it could boast also of quite a stylish little hotel. Riding up to a rack in front of the last, I dismounted, hitched my horse and stepped into the 'office.' 'Can I get quarters here,' said I to the 'gentlemanly clerk' who officiated therein. 'Oh, certainly,' said he, 'we wage war after a civilized fashion, and give quarter to everybody that asks for it—but look out for the bill in the morning.' In those days of scant accommodations a traveler could rarely get a bed to himself, to say nothing of a room, and taking the clerk a little aside, I said to him confidentially, 'I am the traveling agent for Blatter & Blobbs, and as I have a considerable amount of funds with me belonging to the firm, I would like if possible to have a room to myself, and you can charge whatever you think is right for such extra accommodation.' The gentlemanly clerk was evidently prepossessed in my favor by the information I gave him as to the amount of funds in my possession, and at once conducted me to a room up stairs, which he said I could have to myself, and that when the bell rang I could come down to supper. The room he gave me fronted on the street, and in a little while after my horse had been taken to the corral, I heard some one hail the house. Looking through the window, to my dismay, I saw the fearful pop, sitting on his horse, with a double barrel shot-gun on his shoulder. Just then the clerk stepped out to see what he wanted. 'I say,' asked pop, 'has a young feller that was ridin' of a sorrel nag stopped here?' 'Well, I don't know,' said the clerk, 'what sort of a looking fellow was he?' 'Can't say adzactly,' said pop, 'for he wouldn't hold still long enough for me to git a good sight on him, but my darter, Texana, says he was as ornery looking a cuss as she ever laid her eyes on—but I'd know him if I see'd him and I expect he'd know me too (and he was right). I've got a little private business to settle with the gentleman, and it won't take me longer than I can pull a trigger to do it. I'll larn the jackanapes to come kissin' and foolin' 'round my darters. The gentlemanly clerk took in the situation of affairs at once, and I felt considerably relieved when I heard him say: 'I remember now seeing the young man you speak of pass here, but he didn't stop and probably has gone on to the next settlement.' 'May be so,' said pop, 'but you can have my nag put up. I'll wait tell mornin' and look aroun' a bit.' 'You murderin' old villain,' said I, (but of course not quite loud enough for him to hear me), 'you can wait here until morning if you wish, but I won't, that's certain.'

When the bell rang for supper, though I was hungry as a wolf, I didn't go down for obvious reasons. A little while afterwards the clerk came up to my room and asked if I wished for supper. 'No,' said I, 'I am a little under the weather to-day—though I believe I could worry down a cup of tea and a slice of toast if I could have them sent to my room,' and I handed him half a dollar for the waiter. 'All right,' said the clerk, 'I'll send you up as much as I think a sick man ought to eat,' and he gave me a knowing wink. 'By the by,' said I, as he started to go, 'I would like to have my horse at day break, as I am compelled to be at the V—— settlement as early as possible to-morrow.' 'Yes, yes, I understand,' said he, putting his thumb to his nose and gyrating his fingers around it, 'pressing business to attend to for Blatter & Blobbs.' 'Yes,' said I, 'important, and here's a two and a half piece for the trouble I have given you.' 'Much obliged,' said he, and he went out but came back immediately. 'Oh, I forgot to tell you,' said he, 'that there's another gentleman stopping here, who instends to start for the V—— settlement at day-light in the morning, and as he carries a No. 10 guage double barrel shot gun and as you might meet with Indians on the road, perhaps it would be well to travel in company with him.' 'No,' said I, 'since I come to think of it, I shall have to go some ten or fifteen miles beyond the V—— settlement before I stop, and as it will be a long day's ride, I should like to start about half past three.' 'Yes, I understand,' said the clerk, 'don't like to travel with strangers when you have a large amount of funds about you, but perhaps the gentleman is an acquaintance of yours.' 'Don't know a soul in this country,' I said, 'and you must be sure to call me not later than half past three.' 'Nuf ced,' replied the clerk, 'you can depend on me,' and pulling down the lower lid of his left eye, he gave me a comical leer, and went out. Soon afterwards the waiter came up with my supper, and if that gentlemanly clerk had been a regular bred physician, and had made a strict diagnosis of my case, he could not, as far as dirt and quantity was concerned, have prescribed more suitably for it. There was enough ham and eggs, beef-steak, fried chicken and hot muffins, for half-a-dozen ordinary invalids, but having unlimited confidence in the medical knowledge of the clerk, I cleaned the platters before I quit.

"Punctually at half past three he rapped at my door. 'Time's up,' said he, and your horse is hitched to the rack.' I sprang from the bed, and in a few moments was dressed and down stairs.' 'Good by,' said I to the gentlemanly clerk, as I was about to mount my horse. 'Good by,' he said, 'and look out for that double barrel shot gun, but—' and he whispered in my ear, 'I have drawn the loads—twenty-one buck shot in each barrel.' I squeezed the clerk's hand and rolled out, and by the time I reached V—— settlement, pop was 'hull down,' and I suppose gave up the chase, for I have never laid eyes on him or his vixen daughter from that day to this."

"A pretty good yarn," said Willie, "but I hope the next one you spin will have a better specimen of the sex in it. I believe I prefer a yarn like Mr. Dobell's, without a woman in it at all, than one with such a vixenish muscular heroine as yours; and I think (pointing to UncleSeth and Cudjo, who were both fast asleep) our commander-in-chief and his chief of commissary are of the same opinion." Mr. Pitt cast a testy glance towards the commander-in-chief, but he said nothing, and soon afterwards we all "quiled" up in our blankets, and "Morpheus" stole in and quietly took possession of the camp.

CHAPTER XIV.

EXPLORE A PART OF THE COUNTRY ON THE WEST BRANCH OF FRIO—WILD AND BROKEN COUNTRY—ANCIENT MANUFACTORY OF SPEAR AND ARROW HEADS—SOMETHING ABOUT SNORING AND HOW TO STOP IT—COLD SPRING—CAMP AT THE HEAD OF THE FRIO—INDIAN "ART GALLERY"—CUDJO'S YARN OF THE HOOP SNAKE.

The next morning we were all up at daylight, Lawrence, Mr. Pitt and myself preparing for our exploring trip, and Henry and Willie for the deer hunt with the Choctaws. About the time we had everything in readiness for a start, Cudjo announced breakfast, when the roll was called and all hands reported "present and ready for duty." "By the by, boys," said Mr. Pitt, "I think we have slighted Cudjo greatly in not inviting him to go with us on this exploring trip. I know he is anxious to go, particularly as Big Drunk says we may accidentally meet with a small party of Comanches among the canyons and gulches of the Frio, and if so, that we will probably have a decent little scrimmage with them." That chivalric individual just then had his mouth full of buffalo steak, but as soon as he could articulate, he said, "No, I tank you Mass Pitt, I'm doin' berry well here, and ef I wan't, I ain't gwying to leave Mass Seth here all by heself in camp." "Oh, never mind me, ef you want to go," said Uncle Seth, "I kin take dinner with Big Drunk and I reckon I'll do purty well tell you git back." "Well, den," said Cudjo, when he was headed off in his flank movement by Uncle Seth and compelled to fall back to his original position, "well den, de fac' is I don't want to go nohow—much as I kin do to git along wid dese tame Injins here, widout huntin' up dem wile Comanche dat's all de time hankerin' after sculps—'blieve in my soul de ruther jerk de sculp off 'n a pusson's head dan put ten good Maxican dollar in dere pocket—ef de had a pocket to put 'em in. I like mightily to go along wid you," continued Cudjo, observing the look of disoppointment Mr. Pitt had assumed for the occasion, "but de trufe is I doan feel berry well to-day—I've got sich a misery in my side worryin' wid dat mustang ob mine—but," he added, "wen we get back home, ef we's so lucky, I'll go to ebery camp meetin' and corn shuckin' in de settlement wid you if you wants me."

Before leaving, Uncle Seth advised us not to go more than ten or twelve miles from camp, "for," said he, "you'll not have much time to spare twixt now and sun down, arter you have travelled that fur and back agin—Big Drunk says, it's a mighty rough road the way you are goin'—and mind boys," he added for a final piece of advice he never failed to give us when leaving camp, "always keep one eye open for "Mr. John"—when you least suspect he's around, the varmint is *thar* waitin' fur your sculps." "Or, in the words of the poet," said Mr. Pitt, "Eternal vigilance is the price of sculps."

We had not gone more than a mile above the junction of the two streams when we were convinced Big Drunk had not exaggerated the difficulties of the route, and that it would have been utterly impracticable for men on horseback. Indeed it was often only by the most strenuous and fatiguing efforts that we could scramble over the huge boulders that frequently blocked up the way, and up and down the precipitous banks of ihe numerous gulches that intersected the main canyon.

But, although we saw some wild and picturesque scenery and game in abundance on the route, nothing in the way of adventure occurred to us, and after we had tramped up and down gulches, and over rocks and fallen timber, for about ten miles we had enough of it, and returned to camp.

We arrived at camp a little after sun set completely "frazzled out" wlth our tramp of twenty miles. A walk of forty miles on a smooth road would not have fatigued us more. Uncle Seth had begun to get uneasy about us, and was evidently much relieved when we made our appearance. He did not like these independent expeditions anyhow, as he considered himself responsible for our safety, and consequently preferred having us always under his own eye.

Cudjo had supper ready when we came in, and whilst we were discussing it, Henry and Willie gave us an account of their deer hunt. It had been quite a successful one, for they had killed altogether seventeen deer, of which our party were allotted five as our share of the spoils. These had been butchered and cut up into small pieces, which were being 'jerked" on low scaffolds with slow fires burning under them.

The meat prepared in this way was intended for our future provision when we entered upon the great plains beyond the head of the Frio, through which our route lay for several day's travel, and where game of all kinds Big Drunk told us was exceedingly scarce. "I think you must feel some better, Cudjo," said Mr. Pitt to that trenchant warrior, as he was shoveling in the grub deliberately but effectively. "Yes, tank de Lawd, Mass Pitt, I'se purty well dis ebenin,—me and and Mass Seth has had a bully time to-day—nuffin, to do but sleep and plenty to eat, and ef dat don't cure a pusson of any sort of sickness he might thess as well say he prayers." "I believe, after all," said Lawrence, wrapping himself up in his blanket, and stretching himself out comfortably before the fire, "I believe after all Cudjo is more than half right in giving the preponderance to 'grub' and sleep over all other sublunary blessings. We saw some wild and picturesque scenery to-day, but we have paid pretty dearly for the sights. I feel as stiff and as sore as if I had just returned from an Irish wake, and I wouldn't get up now to see the Simplon Pass or Mount Vesuvius in a state of eruption." "You'se right bout dat," said Cudjo, who seemed to have got in some way a shadowy conception of Lawrence's meaning, dar ain't no sense in trampoosing ober gullies and rocks huntin' fur you dunno what, and runnin' de risk of gitten snake bit, when a feller has a chance to quile heself up in he blanket and be easy and comfertible." And I suppose by way of showing that he practiced what he preached, Cudjo drew his martial cloak about him, stretched himself before the fire (head on of course) and in less than five minutes he was fast asleep. In a little while he began to snore, and Uncle Seth who was lying nearest to him gave him a poke now and then in the ribs with a stick to stop his nasal music, or at any rate to make him change the tune. "It does beat all natur'," said he testily, "the way that nigger saws gourds. You can fix him in any way you please, on his back, on his side, or turned bottom upwards and it's all the same. I'd think may be so it was owin' to that nose of his'n, that looks like a dorment winder, only I've knowed some white folks that snored worse'n Cudjo. It's quare," continued Uncle Seth, "and I can't onderstand it adzactly, how snorin' should rasp on my narves morn'n any other noise, but it's so. The meowing of tom cats, the squallin' of spilt childern, the roarin' of big guns, the squeakin', of fifes nor the beatin' of drums don't keep me wake long, but jess let a feller begin sawin' gourds in hearin', and there's no sleep fur me as long as he keeps it up, specially ef he does his work onreglar, as they do in gineral, beginnin' mity slow but gittin' faster and faster tell they breaks off with a snort. But you needn't think they've quit fur good, it's only to catch their breath, and purty soon they commences slow agin, gittin' faster and faster, tell pop, there's another snort, and so they'll keep it up tell a feller feels as if he had the seven year eatch and his narves are all in a twitter. They've got horsepittels fur deaf folks," continued Uncle Seth, "and fur blind folks but a big one is needed wuss'n all fur your everlastin' snorers. Ef I had my way, I'd bild one with walls six feet thick and I'd put every snorer in the country inside of it, and keep 'em there tell they was cured, ef the cussed thing could be cured. Tain't reasonable they should be allowed to go about snorin' people that never did 'em any harm into fits. Many's the night I've got up at taverns and other places where I've been stoppin' and gone out and slept under a tree, fur no reason in the 'varsal world but becase they had put one of these gourd sawyers in the room with me. I'd ruther crawl into a holler log (ef the weather was bad) and take the chances with the snakes and santafees, than stay in a room where one of these snorers is at work."

"Yes," said I, "Uncle Seth, I agree with you fully in all you have said about them, but they don't trouble me as much ow as they did before I learnt how to stop 'em." "Larnt ow to stop 'em?" said Uncle Seth eagerly and raising himlf up on his elbow, "you don't say you know how to do at?" "Yes," said I, "I accidentally learnt how to stop em—at least long enough to give one a chance to go to eep." "Well," said Uncle Seth, "I'll agree to gin you the ery best Spanish pony on my ranch ef you will only larn me e trick." "All right," said I, "and as practice is better than eorizing, I will experiment on Cudjo, and you can watch e operation," Just then Cudjo was about half way from e beginning of a snore to the ending snort. Stepping up where he was making night hideous with his nasal tromone, I grasped it gently but firmly between my forefinger nd thumb, and pressed it so closely as to obstruct his breathng entirely so long as he kept his mouth shut. Cudjo swelled nd puffed himself up like a frog when a snake is trying to wallow it, and after several ineffectual efforts to draw his reath, his mouth flew open suddenly with a gasp, and raisng himself partially, he looked around for a moment in a ort of semi-conscious way and then was asleep again as soon s his head struck the ground—but his snoring ceased. 'Well, well, but that does beat all human natur," said Uncle Seth, laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks, "and I wouldn't take twenty ginerwine Maxican dollars fur the trick. Ef it works so well on Cudjo, I know it will on white folks, fur it's a purty differkilt thing to git a good grip on that nose of his'n, and saying this Uncle Seth wrapped his blanket around him and in five minutes was fast asleep and snoring loudly himself—so prone is poor inconsistent human nature to censure others for the very things we are guilty of ourselves. The old story and over again, the huge beam in our own eyes and the diminutive motes in the eyes of our neighbors. Many things perhaps as Uncle Seth says, "do beat all human natur," but in this particular "human natur" can't be be beat by anything. Whilst I was thus moralizing (a very unusual thing for me as, the reader no doubt has observed) my eyelids gradually grew too heavy to be held up, surrounding objects became more and more indistinct, and in a little while I was sound asleep, and in all probability, busily engaged in sawing gourds myself.

Before the sun had fairly risen the next morning, we had mounted our horses and were en route again, Big Drunk and his warriors, as usual, leading the van. The canon of the western branch of the Frio, we found to be very similar to that of the eastern branch, except that there was a trail along the former which could be traveled by men on horseback.

About noon, we halted to rest for a few moments at the coldest spring I have ever seen in Texas. It ran out of a small cave at the foot of a high precipitous wall or rock, and into a stone basin on the edge of the trail, from which we could readily dip up the water with our tin cups. The water from this spring was so cold that it made the teeth ache. Near it there is a singular cliff composed mainly of soft friable rock of a red color, from which pieces had been chipped off by the Indians to paint themselves when going on their war and plundering expeditions—at least, so Big Drunk informed me, and during my short acquaintance with that respectable "a-bor-i-gine" I found him to be in every way a reliable gentleman. While we were at this spring two of Big Drunk's warriors had a violent altercation about something I know not what, as they spoke in their own language. At one time I thought they were "going for" each other with their tomahawks, but Big Drunk came up and quickly put an end to the row. However, I believe that Indians rarely if ever resort to the "duello" to settle their difficulties, nor do they ever commit suicide; neither do they ever curse and swear, unless they use the oaths taught them by white people, as they have no words for them in their own language.

The canon grew more and more contracted and tortuous and our trail more obstructed by rocks and debris from the cliffs as we approached the source of the Frio, and in consequence we made but slow progress. The sun was nearly setting when we reached the springs—the extreme head of the Rio Frio. There were half a dozen or more of them—fine bold springs bursting out at the foot of a ledge of rocks. The face of this ledge was as smooth and even for the space of fifty or sixty yards as a wall of hewn stone, and upon it, the Indians had painted many grotesque figures of nondescript animals as well as those of buffalo, bear, deer, etc. Some of the latter though rudely, were very correctly drawn. A representation of a fight between Indians and white men occupied a conspicuous place in this aboriginal "art gallery." Of course, the Indians were the victors, as was apparent from the fact that the whites were represented in a very demoralized condition. Some running, pursued by "braves" with uplifted tomahawks in their hands, and others lying dead or wounded upon the ground. One white man was depicted upon his knees with his hands raised in an imploring attitude, as if begging for quarter from a warrior who stood over him with a tomahawk. "Well, now don't that beat all natur?" said Uncle Seth as he scanned this "chef d'ouvre" with a comical look of disgust on his countenance, "but ther's one thing sartin," said he, "they never drawed that pictur of a fight from any of the scrimmages I've been in with 'em."

We pitched our camp for the night near the springs on a small level plateau of ground barely large enough for the purpose. Our horses fared but indifferently, for the grazing was scant, and we were compelled to stake them with shortened ropes for the want of space. After the tent had been stretched and everything made snug about camp, all hands, except Cudjo, took a bath in the cool, clear waters of the stream that flowed off from the springs. Cudjo excused himself upon the pretext of not having time, as he said he wanted to cook supper before dark, but Uncle Seth said the true reason was, that, like all darkies, "he couldn't bear cold water." "They kin beat all natur," said he, "at standin' hot weather, onless it's a Spanish muel; but cold weather and cold water gits 'em, and how that is I never could rightly onderstand, fur I've always hearn tell that black drawed the heat more'n white. Ef I was a preacher and wanted to scare the darkies into the 'straight and narrow path,' I wouldn't tell 'em that the lower place was a lake of burnin' fire ef it was powerful cold weather, for some on 'em would want to go there fur that very reason; but I'd tell 'em it was a bald perara kivered six feet deep with snow and ice, and without a stick of timber to make a fire or to break the cold wind off'n 'em, and I'd have 'em up to the mourner's bench in less'n five minutes." "You appear to be rather down on the darkies," said I to Uncle Seth. "No I ain't," said he, "I never mistreated one of 'em in all my life. They've many good pints; perhaps as many as white people would have ef they had been slavin' for masters fur more'n two hundred years. Considerin' every thing, it's a wonder they isn't a heap wuss than they is, and I hope some day they'll all be set free, and then we'll see how much come out there is in 'em. And as fur their bein' black, the Lord made em so, and I reckon he had a good reason fur it. I kin laugh at many of their ways, but I haint a bit of hard feelin' agin 'em." After supper as we were all seated comfortably around the fire (except Cudjo, who was cleaning up the platters) Mr. Pitt said, "I declare, boys, we have treated Cudjo shamefully. We have been spinning our yarns every night around our camp fires and nobody has called on Cudjo for one. I vote for a yarn from Cudjo." The motion was unanimously seconded. Cudjo at that moment was busily engaged in cleaning the frying pan by the primitive method of heating it red hot and then pouring cold water into it. As soon as the hissing and spluttering attending this operation had ceased, Cudjo said, "Oh, shaw! Mass Pitt, you knows berry well I can't tell a yarn like you and Mass Lawrence and Mass Seth, case you see I ain't got no book larnin', and you must 'scuse me dis ebenin'." "Now, that is not so, boys," said Willie, "for I learnt Cudjo myself to spell in Webster, a long way past Ba-ker." "That makes no difference," said Mr. Pitt, "it's the rule of this camp that everybody, when called upon, must spin a yarn, and Cudjo has less excuse for not complying with it than any one else, for you can see he has plenty of the raw material on his head if there is none inside of it." "Tell us about that 'hoop snake'" suggested Willie.

Thus urged and prompted, Cudgo seated himself near Willie and after hemming and hawing a few times by way of prelude, began his yarn of the hoop-snake, every now and then pausing a moment, unconsciously as it were, to give a polishing touch to a pewter plate he held in his hand. "Well, you see gentle*men*," said Cudjo, laying great stress on *men*, "I nebber tole dat hoop-snake yarn to ennybody ceptin' Mass Willie here, and he make so much fun ob it, I tink I nebber tell it agin. It was long ago, gentle*men*, even dis nigger was a heap younger dan he is now, and afore de reumatiz cotch me in de laigs, and wen I could run like a streak ob litenin'. One ebenin' old Mass Rivers he say to me, 'Cudjo, you go quick and saddle up Ball fur me and fetch him roun' to de front gate, fur I wants to go to town right off.' Well, sirs, I run out to de stable, and somebody done leff de door open, and ole Ball gone off to de pastur. I cotch up a bridle and put out arter him quick as I could, fur I see Mass Rivers was in a mity hurry, and I hunt dat pastur all aroun' and couldn't fine ole Ball nowhar. But dere was one place in it whar I hadn't looked fur him, for de fac is, gentle*men*, I didn't like to go dar, case Uncle Siah tole me he seed a hoop-snake dar two er tree weeks afore dat. Well, gentle*men*, I just shinned up a tree, so I could look all aroun', and shore enuff de fust ting I see was dat ole hoss, jess whar he had no bizness to be, right at de berry place Uncle Siah tole me he seed dat hoop-snake. But dar wan't no use makin' a fuss about it, fur I knowed mity well dat Mass Rivers wouldn't talk berry polite to me ef I went back widout ole Ball. So I clim down de tree and make tracks fur him straight as I could go, all de time keepin' bofe eye open fur dat snake. Well, gemplemen, I got most up to dat old hoss, and nebber see de fust ting, but bimeby I hear someting go whiz! whiz! jess like spinnin' wheel, and I look roun' and shore enuff I seed dat snake come rollin' arter me same as a big hoop wid his tail in he mouf. Gracious, I was dat bad scared at fust I couldn't run a bit, but wen de snake had most got up to me, and I seed he was pullin' on he tail so wen he let go it would come kerblink! and stick he horn in me up to de hub, I lit out fur de house faster'n a quarter nag and ebery time I jump I gin a squall. Uncle Siah tole me wen dem hoop-snake take arter a feller, de only way you can beat 'em is to dodge aroun' ebery tree you comes to, case, he say, dey can't turn berry fast, so I took right frough de thick ob de woods in dat pastur and dodge roun' ebery tree I pass, but gemplemen, ef you'll believe me, wen I was most to de house, I look back and dar was dat dratted snake wid he horn stuck fast in Cudjo's laig! Hoop! Snakes! but I lit out agin, hollerin' murder ebery jump I give tell I got right up to de gate, were I stump my toe and fall down flat. So I tinks I was a goner anyhow, and nebber tried to git up agin but jess lay dar and keep on hollerin'. Bimeby ole Mass Rivers he hear de racket I make and run out to see what was de matter. 'What in thunder you makin' sich a fuss about?' he say to me, wen he come whar I was layin' on the groun'. 'Oh, Mass Rivers,' I say, 'poor Cudjo done fur at lass—de hoop-snake cotch him fass by de laig.' 'Snake,' he say, 'I don't see any snake.' 'Oh yes, dar he is,' I say, 'wid his horn stuck fass in Cudjo's laig.' 'Why, you fool,' he say, larfin tell de tear come in he eye, 'that's no snake at all—that's my bridle.' I jess guile my haid aroun' a little and shore enuff it was de bridle; but I was dat bad scared I had forgot I had a bridle wid me and tink it was a hoop-snake follerin' me."

"Well, what became of the snake," said Mr. Pitt.

"Oh, I was jess goin' to tole you," said Cudjo. "Fur a long time I was afraid to go out dar and look fur him, but about tree week arterwards, as I was comin' frough de woods whar dat snake run me, I see a big 'simmon tree wid de leaf all turn yaller. 'Ki!' I say, 'what kill dat tree, and I'll jess go an' look,' fur I was mity sorry for see dat tree kill, case I cotch many fat possum out'n it, and ef you'll berlieve me, gemplemen when I come to it, dar was dat hoop snake hangin' to it dead as a hammer. Wen I dodge aroun' dat tree he let slip he tail at me and druv he horn so deep in it he nebber could pull it out, and jess starve dere fur someting to ete; and gemplemen, it's de Lawd's trufe, de bark done scale up on dat tree from pizen in he horn, clar up to de top, and de leaf turn yaller jess like litenin strike it." Well, arter dat de niggers poke heap fun at Cudjo becase he run so fass from de hoop—from Mass Rivers' bridle, and say he nebber see no hoop snake nohow, but I jess leff 'em talk and didn't pay no 'tention to 'em. But one night I went wid Liza Jane (dat's my wife now) to a corn shuckin' at ole Mass Tompkins', and dat feller Lem Sykes was dar, who wanted to cut me out wid Liza Jane powerful bad, only he couldn't quite come it. Well, arter de shuckin' was ober ole Mass Tompkins gin us a fust rate supper, and jess as I was helpin' Liza Jane to de fat hine laig of a possom and some sweet mertaters, long come dat feller Sykes and he say, 'Look out Cudjo, I tink I see hoop snake rollin' dis way, but maybe so it's nuthin but a bridle.'

I nebber said anything, but I look at him jess so," said Cudjo, staring at Mr. Pitt with a most ferocious grin. "Well, jess as soon as I done help Liza Jane, I says to her 'please 'scuse me a little while fur I want to see dat feller Sykes,' and I git right up and foller him. I found him sneakin' roun' agin to de table whar Liza Jane was, and I says to him, 'Look a here, Sykes, you're breedin' a powerful scab on your nose ef you only knowed it, and the next time you say hoop snake to me I'll kick your shins good.' 'You will, hey! Well den, hoop snake,' says he, and he sorter squared himself up to me. Wid dat I hit him a pop on he snout and den we clinch, and de way de wool fly was a caution. At lass I gin him a trip and frowed him flat on de groun', but he was on top, case you see he was lighter dan I was. Well, sirs, I was jess layin' dur under him and he was mashin' up he fists on my haid tell I acterly begun to feel sorry fur the feller, and was most ready to holler nuff, when Liza Jane come up and hit Sykes right on he shin wid a hoe handle, and he quile up same as a tousand laig wurrum wen you poke him wid a stick. Before dat time I wan't adzactly sartin which one Liza Jane like most, me er Sykes, but arter dat I knowed mity well it was me, case you see it don't stand to reason dat a womun will leave a plate full ob fat possum and sweet mertaters to fite fur a feller less'n she likes him; and dat, gemplemen, wind up de ball ob yarn."

"Why, Cudjo," said Mr. Pitt, "you can beat Baron Munchausen at spinning a yarn. It's the best one I've heard yet, and that's saying a good deal for it, for I have told several myself." Cudjo was evidently much gratified by Mr. Pitt's praise, but I have my doubts as to its being entirely disinterested, for he added immediately afterwards, "Cudjo, you mustn't forget to grease my boots again to-night." "Cudjo's yarn had but one fault," said I, "it was too soon ended."

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE TRAIL AGAIN—UNCLE SETH'S YARN—INDIAN SIGN—BIG DRUNK SENDS OUT SPIES, WHO DISCOVER A COMANCHE CAMP—CUDJO TAKEN BAD WHEN HE LEARNS THAT A FIGHT IS AT HAND—PREPARING FOR THE SCRIMMAGE.

The next morning we were on the road as soon as it was light enough for us to travel. Our horses had fared badly, and we were anxious to get to some locality, with as little delay as possible, that would afford them better grazing. From our camp at the springs, the trail ascended a steep, high ridge, and when we reached the summit, we found ourselves on the border of the great plains that stretched away to the west as far as our sight extended. Towards the south and east we could see the misty outlines of the range of high hills in which many of the streams of Western Texas take their rise. The trail from the springs bore nearly due north, and though apparently it was all a high level plateau in that direction, we found as we proceeded that the surface was cut up by numerous gulches and hillocks, clothed in some places with thorny chapparal bushes and scattered tufts of coarse grass, and in others merely with a debris of broken rocks It was as wild and desolate a scene as could be imagined. Not an animal was visible, not a bird, nor, in fact, any living thing in this desert region, except now and then a horned frog darting across the trail, or a rattlesnake coiled up and basking in the sun, and too lazy even to spring his rattles as we passed by. Not a sound was audible at any time, except the monotonous tramp, tramp of our horses as their iron-shod hoofs came in contact with the stony soil. In all the distance we traveled during the forenoon, we saw no place where it appeared possible for a man on horseback to have gone fifty yards from the trail we were following. Towards noon we began to suffer considerably from thirst, for the day was the warmest we had experienced on the route, and there was not a cloud in the heavens to shield us from the scorching rays of the sun. Shortly afterwards we noticed a "signal smoke" rising up a long way to the west. It rose up in a perpendicular column to a considerable height, spreading out at the top like an umbrella, and after remaining stationary for a few moments, it suddenly collapsed and vanished from view. Presently another and another made their appearance in different directions, until no less than three of them were in sight at the same time. "The Injins know we are about," said Uncle Seth to me. "They are arter some devilment, certin,—and there must be a good many of 'em, too," he added, "fur where you see one of them smokes, there's a party of the varmints clost by." "And how do they make those smokes?" I asked. "Well, I can't say adzactly," replied Uncle Seth. "Bill Short, who was tuck prisoner by the Comanches when he was a lad, and lived with 'em a long time, says they make them smokes by heapin' wet and dry grass in a pile and wrappin' a green hide around it afore they sets it on fire. This may be so, but I never could find the place where they had made the smoke, though I've searched fur 'em often; and how they kin make the smoke go straight up in the a'r when the wind is blowin' hard, is somethin' I can't rightly understand. They's curious things certin."

About four o'clock in the afternoon, we came to a little muddy pool of water, on the edge of a thick chapparal, and as Big Drunk said it was the only water we would find for more than twenty miles, it was thought best to stop and encamp for the night. Big Drunk had noticed the signal smokes and other signs of the proximity of Comanches, and suggested that we should pitch our camps together and post a strong guard around them, which was done. After our horses had been staked out on the scanty grass in the vicinity of the water, or more properly speaking, of the mud hole, and supper over, Henry was placed on guard, and the balance of us stretched ourselves on our blankets before the fire. "It's to soon to turn in yet, said Willie, and I think Uncle Seth might do something for the entertainment of the crowd, especially as I see he has go his pipe in full blast." "All but the blast," said Uncle Seth, sucking the stem vainly for a little smoke, "'pears to me this dratted stem is always choked up"—and no wonder, for Willie generally kept it plugged. At length, however, with the aid of a spear of grass the plug was forced out, and after puffing a while meditatively, Uncle Seth said: "Did I ever tell you about the way my old compadre Joe Darter got himself into a tight place bertwixt a bufferlo bull and a bar?" "No," said Willie, "tell us about it." "Well, you see," said Uncle Seth, "not very long ago me and Joe Darter was coming in from a scout arter Injins, on the headwaters of the Sandies. There was thirty-five on us in the company, but all except Joe and me was from Bearstrack, and we wanted to go to Austing. So we left the company when we was about seventy miles from there and struck out by ourselves. Somehow 'bout that time game of all sorts was mity scace in the country we had to travel over, and fur two days we didn't kill a thing, and in course we got powerful hongry, as we had nothin' to eat but what we could git with our guns. The mornin' of the third day arter we had left the company, I says to Joe 'this sort of thing ain't going to do at all. Meat we must have afore we camp, fur my stomick feels like a empty haversack. So keep your eye skinned and let's make sartain of the fust thing we see.' Joe said he was agreeable, and we traveled on, keeping a sharp look out fur deer or any animule big enough to make a dinner on. Nigh the middle of the day, jest as we was about goin' out of some timber into a little perara, I seed an ole bufferlo bull feedin' by himself in the open. 'Stop,' says I, 'Joe, yander's meat and we must have it. Ole bull aint the best the market affords, but there's plenty of it sich as it is, and I goes in now fur quantity more'n fur quality,' says I. There was a small clump of chapparal in about seventy yards of the ole bull, and as Joe toted a heavy rifle, and was a fust-rate shot, I told him ef he would crawl out to them bushes and gin him a pop, I would be all ready jest as soon as I hearn his gun fire to run out and help him finish him, perviden he didn't up him. 'All right,' says Joe, and so we crept to the edge of the timber, whar I stopped, and Joe crawled on his hands and knees towards the bushes, snakin' his gun arter him as he went. As soon as he got to the bushes he raised up and took a pop at the ole bull. I seed at once he was struck, but not very hard, and the minit the gun fired, the ole bull made a rush for the smoke and at the same time I riz and put out to help Joe, as fast as my legs could carry me, while Joe made tracks fur me. It was nip and tuck fur a spell bertwixt Joe and the ole bull, but purty quick the bull come up with him, and jest as he was leveling his head to gin Joe a hist with his horns, all at once Joe pitched headforemost into a hole in the ground. The bull stopped short, wonderin' I 'spose what had become of Joe, when in less'n a minit out he popped agin right under the nose of the bufferlo. He drapped his head to gin Joe a rake with his short stubby horns, but jest then I up and fired a chance shot at him, and as good luck would have it, I drapped him as dead as a hammer. Joe stopped as soon as he seed the bull fall, and stood there pantin' and blowin' like a deer hound arter a long chase. I felt mad with the feller fur not stayin' in that hole arter he got in it, fur if I hadn't accerdentally killed the bufferlo, it would have been good-by

Joe, certin; so when I got up to where he was, I says to him ruther pettishly: 'Why in thunder, Joe, didn't you stay in that hole, arter you had hived yourself in it? You was safe enough there from the bufferlo.' 'O, yes!' says Joe, as soon as he could catch his breath, 'I was safe enough from the bufferlo down there, but I wan't from a big bar that's at the bottom of that hole. I didn't stay down thar a great while as you seed, but anyhow I was thar long enough,' said Joe, 'to leave the tail of my huntin' shirt in his paws, and mighty glad I was to git off on them terms, I kin tell you.' Joe looked so comical while he was tellin' me his story and standin' there pantin' in his bobtail huntin' shirt, that I laughed till I got the hiccups. 'Well, Joe,' said I at last, 'I must own up you was in a purty tight place, with a bufferlo bull arter you above ground and a big bear grabbing fur you under it.'"

"He was was between Scylla and Charybdis," said Mr. Pitt.

"I don't know 'bout that, said Uncle Seth, but he had jumped out'n the frying pan into the fire, certin. Howsomever, Joe got even with the bar, fur we smoked him out'n his hole and shot him, and instead of tough old bull, we toated as much fat bar meat into camp that night as we could stagger under."

As soon as Uncle Seth had finished his yarn, he slowly extracted his big bullseye silver watch from his fob, and glancing at its face by the light of the fire, he said, "It's nigh on to ten o'clock, boys, and we'd better turn in, fur we've got to make an airly start in the mornin'," and by way of setting us an example, he wrapped his blanket about him and was soon in the land of Nod. We all followed suit, and slept soundly till daylight.

Before sunrise the next morning, we were mounted and off again on the trail. Several times during the day we saw "signal smokes" rise up in the distance, and once where a trail intersected the one we were traveling, we observed that it had been recently passed over by a considerable number of unshod horses and mules. We pushed on as rapidly as the roughness of the trail would permit, and about three o'clock in the afternoon (by Uncle Seth's bullseye) we descended from the elevated mesa into a small valley, if it might be so called, for it did not comprise within its limits more than fifty acres of ground. Scattered about its surface were several little groves of pecan, elm and hackberry trees (the first we had seen since leaving the head of the Frio), and everywhere it was covered with a luxuriant growth of mesquite grass, which no doubt was a pleasant sight to our horses after the scanty rations they had had for the last twenty-four hours, for they pricked up their ears and whickered, evidently in joyful anticipation of the treat in store for them. The little valley, with its green grass and shady groves, looked like an emerald set in the desert waste around. But where was the water with which to slake our burning thirst? Not a brook or streamlet was visible anywhere. The question was soon answered satisfactorily, however, for our trail suddenly debouched upon the precipitous bank of a deep pool near the center of the valley, probably formed by the sinking of the earth at that point by the undermining action of a subterranean stream. The bank, or rather the sides of this pool, were almost perpendicular, and the water, which looked cool and inviting below, was only accessible at one place to men and animals. The pool was in the shape of a semi-circle, and within the concave side, under some elm and hackberry trees, we pitched our camps, and as soon as we had unsaddled and staked our amimals, every one hurried down to the water to quench the thirst we had been enduring for some hours past. We found the water excellent. Cool and clear, but with a slight chalybeate taste by no means disagreeable. The pool seemed to be of very great depth, and was swarming with fish of various kinds. Willie and I determined to have a mess of them, but as matters turned out "we had other fish to fry" as long as we remained in the vicinity. Returning to camp, we found Uncle Seth and Big Drunk seated on a log in front of our tent, holding a "confab" as to the prospect of a little "scrimmage" with the Comanches. From the "sign" they had seen on the way, they both had come to the conclusion that there was quite a large party of Comanches somewhere near by, and that it was probable they would attack us before we left the pool. "I no like so much 'smoke' and track on the road," said Big Drunk. "Dem lascal Comanche want scalp purty bad." "I think so too," replied Uncle Seth, "but we've got a mighty good camp here, and I reckon we kin thrash 'em easy ef they should come." "Yes," said Big Drunk, "I tink dem boy you got fite belly well, and Choctaw whip Comanche ebery time."

It was still several hours to sunset, and it was finally determined to send several of Big Drunk's warriors ahead on the trail to see what discoveries they could make, and in the meantime that we should go to work and fortify our position, though in fact very little was necessary to be done to render it impregnable against any force the Indians were likely to have. Not more than two hours had elapsed after the departure of Big Drunk's spies, when they came galloping back, and riding up to Big Drunk, whose camp was but a few yards from ours, we heard them talking to him in an excited manner. "Them chaps have seed somethin', certin," said Uncle Seth, "and I'll step over and larn the news." In a little while Uncle Seth came back, and told us Big Drunk's spies had reported that they had seen from the top of a high ridge a large Comanche camp in a little valley similar to the one in which we were, and from the stir and bustle in camp they were satisfied the Comanches were preparing to leave it.

The spies believed they were getting ready to attack us that night, or early the next morning, "and," added Uncle Seth, "that's my notion too, and the sooner we fix for 'em, the better. They won't catch us nappin,' anyhow. We couldn't have a safer place to camp if we had the pick of the whole country. We've got the water hole on three sides, and thick chapparal on the other, and we can soon fix that so a hundred Comanches couldn't rout us out tell our rations was gone, and anything but a small crowd of 'em would have to leave to hunt up grub fur themselves afore they could starve us out. But what's gone with Cudjo," added Uncle Seth, looking around for that "cullud pusson," "I don't see him no whar about." That redoubtable warrior had been listening for some time to what Uncle Seth was saying, and after hearing enough to satisfy himself that a fight would probably come off pretty soon, had quietly retired, wrapped his blanket around him and laid down by the fire. "Hello! Cudjo," said Uncle Seth, when he espied him, covered up head and all in his blanket, "roll out'n that quick, and git your shootin' irons, fur I think we'll have the genteelest little scrimmage turectly that you ever seed, and I depend on you pertickler to rake the Comanches with that blunderbuss of yourn."

"Deed, Mass Seth," said Cudjo, with his teeth chattering like a monkey's, "You must 'scuse me a little bit tell I gits ober dis bad spell. I've such a misery in my back you can't tink, and de rumatiz done cotch me agin in de laig, and dat ole jaw tooth dats done nothin' but ake ebber sence we leff home (I wish I'd staid dar), is fittin' to jump out'n my mouf." "Well, you are bad off," said Uncle Seth, looking rather contemptuously at him; "You are bad off, it's a fact, but I think, Cudjo, it's your stomick that's out'n order. You haven't a bit of appetite for fitin'."

In a little while Big Drunk came over to our tent, and he
nd Uncle Seth had another palaver as to the best course to
ursue under the circumstances. Neither had hardly a
oubt that the Comanches intended making an attack on us,
nd they concluded it would be prudent to fortify our posi-
on as well as we could before night set in, and quietly wait
or them to take the initiative. It required but little work to
ender our camp almost impregnable, for, as I have said be-
ore, we had the steep banks of the water hole on three sides,
nd the other was nearly as well protected by a strip of
horny chapparal bushes. There were two or three small
pen places in this chapparal, by which the little prairie
here we were encamped could be entered, and these, with
e exception of the largest, we filled up compactly with
horny bushes and shrubs, which we cut down with our
utcher knives and tomahawks. "That's all right," said Un-
le Seth, when we had completed the work to his satisfaction,
and if the Comanches git through this chapparal they won't
ave much in the way of breeches, or ruther hide, left on 'em
hen they do. Howsomever," he added, "though they can't
t at us on the sides next the water hole, they kin shoot
cross it, and we must fix some way to pertect ourselves from
e bullets and arrers that may come from that quarter."
ortunately, there was an abundance of loose stones, fallen
mber, etc., in the vicinity, and with such materials we soon
onstructed a breastwork facing the main opening through
e strip of chapparal, and of sufficient length to enable our
hole party to take shelter behind it, whenever it might be
ecessary to do so.

Before we had entirely completed our fortifications, Cudjo
covered to some extent from the numerous ills with which
e had been afflicted, and assisted us in the work, but I don't
ink he labored as cheerfully as he would have done at a
corn shucking" or "log rolling." "'Fore gracious, Mass

Jack," said he to me, whilst helping me to carry a stick of timber to the breastwork, "'Fore gracious, I don't see any sense in rampagin' all ober dis wile country, fitin' Mexican hog, lion and Injuns, when we could stay at home safe and comfortible. It's jess a temptin' of de Lord, dat's what it is."

"Yes, Cudjo," said I, "it's true we could stay at home and be comfortable and all that, but then, you see, if you had staid at home you would not be, as you are now, one of a band of adventurous explorers, a kind of "cullud" Columbus on a journey of discovery, and you must remember that you will be amply compensated in the end, for your perils and privations, by the consciousness that you have done your share towards the exploration of this mundane sphere." "May be so," replied Cudjo, who really seemed to have a dim idea of what I was driving at, notwithstanding the high-flown language I used, "May be so, but what good all dat goin' to do Cudjo when he dead and gone, and he sculp hangin' up in de Injens camp? Dat's de question." "Why, Cudjo," said I, evading his direct query, which I was afraid I could not answer satisfactorily, "don't you remember that your Mass Lawrence called the high, flat peak we passed the other day, 'Cudjo's Knob,' because he said it looked like your head, and that he put the name on the map he is making? Well, from this time on that peak will always be known as 'Cudjo's Knob,' and you will be immortalized for all time to come as the enterprising explorer in whose honor it was named." But Cudjo did not appear to be particularly impressed by the immortality in store for him, and if he had ever read Shakespeare, I have no doubt he would have quoted those well known words, "Who hath honor? He that was slain o' yesterday. Doth he feel it, hear it, see it, taste it, smell it? No. Then I'll none of it." But Cudjo had never heard of the Bard of Avon, so he only said, "I'd ruther be alive and fat and hearty, with plenty of vittles to eat, if every body was to forgit Cudjo, than be dead and gone, and hab every body remember him fur a hundred and fifty year." "Well, Cudjo," said I, wishing to place matters in a hopeful point of view, I think it won't be long now before we turn our faces towards home, and I have no doubt that you will be soon safe and sound in the settlements again." "I hopes so," replied Cudjo, with a dubious shake of the head, "I wish I was dar now. I'm gittin' mity tired trampoosin' 'bout dis wile country, and ob dis here hard tack and bufferlo meat. I'm railly sufferin' fur bacon and collards and fatty bread."

Before night our brestworks were all completed, and Uncle Seth said we were then ready for the whole Comanche nation, if they should venture to attack us in our stronghold. We let our horses graze outside till nearly dark, and then brought them in and tied them securely.

Our Indian allies seemed much elated at the prospect of a good, wholesome scrimmage. They evidently had been "spiling for a fight" for some time, judging from their unusual merriment and the alacrity with which they made preparations for one.

An Indian has two phases of existence in which his character seems radically different—his "nil admirari" state as it might be termed, or his interludes of peace and quiet (which however are generally few and far between), in which he appears listless, unimpressionable and lacking vim or energy, and his normal condition of fighting or preparing for battle. Then he becomes another being altogether—his eyes beam with intelligence, his conceptions impulsive and quick, and his movements correspondingly rapid and energetic. This may in some measure account for the fact that many Indians have been noted for the extraordinary military talents they possessed. Tecumseh, Black Hawk and Osceola for instance, uneducated and without any knowledge of military tactics, were yet able to handle large bodies of men, with skill and efficiency, and sometimes to more than hold their own against our most famous generals.

In loading their rifles I noticed that the Choctaws chewed their bullets before ramming them down, and asking one of them the reason for doing so, he told me that the chewed bullet "kill Comanche heap." No doubt they make a more ragged wound and one more difficult to heal, but then I suppose they cannot be thrown as accurately as the perfect ball. I happened to be placed on the first watch after dark, and was stationed in company with a Choctaw Indian behind the breastwork we had built in front of the entrance to our camps. For an hour or so after I was placed on guard it was so dark I was unable to see anything distinctly outside, but at the end of that time the moon rose up, and rendered all objects visible in the open ground beyond the belt of chapparal. The night was unusually still, and not a sound was audible except the restless stamping of our horses at their picket ropes—none whatever to indicate the proximity of a hidden foe. I was just coming to the conclusion that Uncle Seth and Big Drunk had over-rated the danger of an attack, when I heard a whip-poor-will utter his plaintive cry in a clump of bushes forty or fifty yords from where we were stationed. It was answered immediately by the hooting of an owl across the water-hole in the opposite direction, and then, as if that had been the signal for the full orchestra to begin, the night was instantly made hideous by the howling of wolves, the screams of wild cats and panthers and the cries and notes of many other animals and birds. "Ah, hah!" said my Choctaw companion, "may be so Comanche come now," and cautiously raising his head above the breastwork he gazed long and intently into the open ground beyond. He was apparently about to resume his original position, when I heard a "swish" and at the same instant an arrow struck a decayed piece of wood within a few inches of his head. "Ugh!" exclaimed the Choctaw, ducking his head quickly behind the breastwork, "dem lascal Comanche shoot arrow purty well." I peeped above the breastwork, expecting to see their dusky forms thronging the open space in front, but not a moving object was visible, and nothing to indicate that a concealed enemy was near by except the continuous cries of animals and birds.

The night wore on without any further disturbance, and at length the Choctaw and myself were relieved by the second watch. I told them to keep a good look out as the Comanches were certainly around, and going back to camy I threw myself upon my blanket and was fast asleep in five minutes. I had slept I supposed about an hour, though in fact several hours had elapsed since I laid down, when I was aroused by Uncle Seth saying: "Come boys, git out'n this quick. It will soon be daylight, and if the Comanches have any igee of pitchin' inter us, the row'll begin afore long. We must be all ready fur'em, for I want to give the varmints a lesson they'll remember a good while, and I think we's just in trim to do it." All hands were up in an instant and preparing for the expected fray. After some palaver on the subject, it was determined that Uncle Seth and his party should man the breastwork fronting the entrance, whilst Big Drunk and his warriors should occupy the one they had constructed fronting the water-hole.

CHAPTER XVI.

Comanches attack us—Henry and Cudjo are slightly wounded—Cudjo exhibits unexpected bravery—One of the Choctaws killed—Comanches finally driven off—Burial of the Choctaw——Camp on Llano—Return to Frontier Hall—Concluding Remarks.

Silently we took our places behind the breastwork, and quietly waited for the expected enemy to put in an appearance. "Ef they do come, and I rather expect they will," said Uncle Seth, "don't shoot boys, tell you git good aim. One gun that ups a Comanche will scare 'em more than a dozen that don't do anything but make a noise." Hardly had these words been uttered by Uncle Seth, when the fearful war-whoop resounded from all sides, and the next moment a hundred dusky forms were seen bounding across the open space in front, pouring bullets and arrows upon our breastwork as they came. The instant he heard the terrible war-whoop, I noticed Cudjo make a dive into the adjoining chapparal and disappear from sight, and that was the last we saw of him for some time. We reserved our fire until the Comanches were within thirty or forty paces, when we poured a volley upon them from our guns and they fell back quickly, carrying with them several who had either been killed or wounded.

"That's the way to sarve 'em, boys," said Uncle Seth, who was highly delighted by the steadiness we had shown under fire, "but they'll try it agin shore, so load as fast as you kin." We made all the haste we could to prepare ourselves for another charge, and yet we had not a minute to spare, for quickly rallying their forces, with a wild yell more terrible than anything I had ever heard, they rushed again upon our breastwork. But when at close quarters we again received them with such a rapid discharge from our guns that their advance was checked, and they fell back to the cover of the chapparal. In this charge some of the foremost Indians came within a few yards of our position, so near in fact that we used our pistols with effect, after discharging our guns. In this attack we had satisfactory evidence of the superiority of the double barrel shot-gun over the rifle for repelling a charge. The rifle even when in the hands of one not subject to the "buck ager," and aimed with accuracy, can only take effect upon a single object, but when sixty "blue whistlers" are "let drive" upon a crowd (thirty in each barrel) the fur will fly from perhaps half a dozen.

One Indian fell dead so close to our breastwork that the others did not attempt to carry him off when they retreated. After falling back the second time, the Indians still continued to fire upon us from "long taw," to which we made no return, except occasionally when one showed himself in the open ground. All this time a heavy firing was kept up by a large body of Comanches on the opposite side of the water hole, to which our Choctaws were not slow to respond from behind their breastwork. Occasionally a ball or an arrow from that quarter would strike in our midst, and after Henry had been slightly wounded, and several of our horses more or less injured, we concluded, if possible, during a short lull in the "bombardment," to erect some kind of a barrier as a protection from this cross-fire. But what to make it of was the question, as we had used up all the material available for our breast-works. "Git your blankets," said Uncle Seth, "and we'll see what we can do with them." The blankets were quickly collected, and then Uncle Seth ordered us to cut down half a dozen sapplings for forks, and as many more for poles. This we soon did with our tomahawks, for men work rapidly when bullets and arrows are whizzing about their ears. The forks were driven into the ground in the rear of our breastworks, and poles laid across them, on which Uncle Seth directed us to hang our blankets (doubled), in such a way that they nearly, but not quite, reached the ground. "It don't look reasonable," said Uncle Seth, "but it ain't often that a bullet or an arrow will go through a double blanket when they hang loose in that way. I've seed it tried more'n once." And so it proved, for but few bullets penetrated the blankets we hung up, and when they did their force was so far spent they could not inflict a serious wound. But they could now and then penetrate it, and bruise tremenduously, I can safely assert, for I had scarcely got mine in position when a bullet came through it, striking me full on the nose, and for a week afterwards, in place of my ordinary Roman snout, I sported one as flat as a Guinea nigger's.

Just as we had fixed up our blanket bomb-proof, we were startled by a yell in the chapparal a few paces distant, and the next moment Cudjo came rushing out, and running up to the breastwork he threw himself on the ground, exclaiming, "Oh, Lawd, Mass Pitt, dey's done kill Cudjo at lass—shot him troo and troo wid dere arrer." Several of us ran to Cudjo and lifted him up, and sure enough, we found that a bullet had gone through the calf of his leg, inflicting what could not well be termed a flesh wound, for there was precious little of that commodity where the calves of his legs should have been, and yet truly could not be called anything else, as we ascertained the bone was entirely uninjured. Mr. Pitt, in whom Cudjo had unbounded confidence, and who officiated as surgeon on the occasion, wrapped up the wound with a handkerchief, and assured him that it was a slight one, and that he would be well in less than a week.

As soon as Cudjo was satisfied that he had not been shot "troo and troo," and that there was no danger of his dying immediately, a wonderful change appeared to come over him. "Make haste," said he to Mr. Pitt who had not quite finished bandaging his wound, "make haste, Mass Pitt, fur I tell you I'ze gwying to fite dese Comanches now, sartin. Dey no bizness to shoot Cudjo fur he wan't troublin' none of 'em (which was the fact); I was jess layin' in de bushes behind er ole log, when zip! a bullet come from de oder way and go clean troo my laig, and now," said he, getting up and seizing his blunderbuss, when Mr. Pitt had completed his surgical operations, "I'm gwine to git even wid dem Injin, shore." And truly did Cudjo make good his words during the balance of the fight. A complete change seemed to have taken place in his character. In place of his usual timidity, he displayed the utmost daring and even recklessness, for wherever the bullets and arrows were flying thickest, we were sure to see him blazing away with his blunderbuss at every Comanche who showed his head above the chapparal. I do not think he did much execution; nevertheless, he made an immense deal of noise, for he always loaded his gun so heavily that it invariably kicked him over at every discharge. Each time, however, he would get up with renewed vigor and desperation saying, "he didn't mind kickin' ef dey'd only let he shin alone." Our Indian allies, especially, were much astonished at Cudjo's unexpected display of valor, and they frequently cheered him when he let off his fusee (with a report like a small piece of ordnance) and witnessed the energy with which it rebounded, thinking, I suppose, if it was so dangerous behind, that the execution in front must have been proportionately great. But for my part, I strongly suspected that Cudjo's bravery was simply the result of desperation or because he had found out that he ran no greater risk when fighting than he did as a non-combatant. I think Uncle Seth also entertained some doubts as to the genuineness of the valor displayed by Cudjo, for I overheard him remark on one occasion, as it were, to himself, whilst watching his feats of prowess, "Well, it does beat all natur the way that nigger has come out'n the kinks. I didn't think it was in him, and yet, somehow, if we was to git into a fight to-morrow I ruther think he would take to the chapparal agin ef there was one handy." However, neither Uncle Seth nor I ever hinted our suspicions on this point to Cudjo or any one else, and his reputation as a fighting man was never impugned from that time. Our Indian allies were so much struck with his reckless bravery, that I verily believe that if Big Drunk had been killed in the fight they would have tendered him the chieftainship of the band.

The Comanches made several attempts to charge our breastworks, but each time they were signally repulsed and driven back to the chapparal, from whence they kept up a desultory fusillade until they finally went off. It was evident they had abandoned all hope of routing us out of our stronghold, and in fact, an hour or so after their last attempt to derive us from our position, they ceased firing upon us, mounted their horses, and silently took up their line of march in the direction we had come. Just as they began to move off, Cudjo jumped up on the breastwork and gave them a farewell salute from his fusee, which, as usual, kicked him over. "Now, drat you," said Cudjo, picking himself up, "now, I 'spec de next time folks ain't troublin' you, you'll let 'em alone—you won't toat off many sculps from dis place, certin."

When the Comanches made their last desperate charge upon us, Big Drunk reinforced our party at the opening with ten or twelve of his warriors to aid us in its defense. One of them was struck with an arrow in the breast, which had been sent with such force that the point protruded from his back. One of the Choctaws ran to him, forced the arrow through, and drew it, shaft and all, from the wound. The instant it was extracted the blood gushed out in a copious stream, and the Indian expired almost immediately. This was the only loss sustained in the fight, but several Choctaws were slightly wounded and one of their horses killed. None of our party were wounded except Henry and Cudjo, and neither of them seriously.

And thus ended our big fight with the Comanches, in which, according to Cudjo's subsequent account of it, "we whip off five hunderd wile Injins, and kill 'bout fifty dade on de ground." I cannot entirely verify this statement of Cudjo's, for I do not think there were more than seventy or eighty Comanches in the party, and I saw but one dead Indian. I have no doubt, however, that we killed and wounded at least a dozen, for we saw them carry off a number upon their pack animals when they retreated. After the excitement of the fight was over, Cudjo suffered a good deal of pain from his wound, but as he had his newly acquired character of a fighting man to sustain, he bore it with much fortitude. Mr. Pitt applied a prickly pear poultice to the wound, and a little while afterwards he "quiled" himself up in his blanket and went to sleep. The next morning he was hopping around quite lively, and able to attend, as usual, to his culinary department.

Not long after the Comanches had retreated, Mr. Pitt and Cudjo went out to take a look at the one that had been killed a few paces from our breastwork, and who had been left on the ground. This Comanche had a long cue of horse hair fastened behind to his own hair, on which ten or a dozen Mexican dollars, beaten out in thin plates, were attached at regular intervals by way of ornament. Cudjo seized upon this cue and its appendages as lawful spoils of war, and carried it back with him to the settlements, where he would exhibit it on special occasions to crowds of admirers as a sample of many similar spoils taken from the Comanches in the great fight the "'Splorers had wid 'em tother side the head ob de Frio."

The morning after the fight the Choctaw who had been killed was buried by his comrades with the ceremonies customary on such occasions. They dug a shallow grave just where he had fallen, with their tomahawks and butcher knives, and in this the body of the "brave" was deposited, together with his rifle, shot pouch and other personal belongings. A quantity of dead leaves and grass was strewn over him, on which the earth was shoveled back until the excavation was filled, and a number of stones piled upon it. When the burial was finished the warriors walked slowly around the grave in a circle, singing the "death song," and a most lugubrious wailing it was. "Um!" exclaimed Cudjo, who, like the majority of darkies, was gifted with a good ear to music, "dem Ingins mity good fur fitin, but dey don't wuff a cent fur singin'; dat chune wouldn't do fur a camp-meetin' er a corn shuckin', no how."

We remained at the water hole for several days, and until our wounded (men and animals) were able to travel. We then continued our route by easy stages to the headwaters of the Llano, beautiful clear little streams watering a picturesque and mountainous country. On one of these little streams we pitched our camp, in a small valley hemmed in by high hills, and covered with a rich growth of grass, which afforded excellent pasturage for our animals. Uncle Seth told us that Big Drunk intended to stop in that valley for a few days to trap beaver. "And I reckon," said he, "we mout as well stop too, and you'll have a good chance to look at this section, which, I expect, is wuth seein', and besides," he added, "our crowd is a little too small, even countin' in Cudjo, to be rampagin' 'bout this country, and I don't want to leave the Choctaws till we are nigher the settlements. In the mornin' we'll go to work and fix up everything snug around camp so we'll be safe while we are here from them dratted Comanches, though arter the way Cudjo sarved 'em at the water hole, I don't think they'll gin us another turn purty soon."

Just after we returned to camp several of Big Drunk's warriors, who had gone out hunting, came in, bringing with them a fat cub bear and a half dozen turkeys. They gave us about fifty pounds of bear meat and a large gobbler, which we turned over to the tender mercies of Cudjo, who went to work upon them at once, and by sunset he had prepared a supper that would have satisfied the most exacting gormand. The turkey and bear steaks were cooked to a turn, the coffee was hot and strong, but the "piece de resistance" was the roasted loin of the cub, served up with honey; a dish that would make an old frontiersman lick his chops if he had just got up from a table covered "with all the delicacies of the season." On this particular occasion Cudjo excelled himself, but, unlike doctors who never take the medicines they prepare for others, he did full justice to his own cooking, and "exhibited" to himself such a dose of tenderloin and honey that we were convinced he was not a believer in "homeopathic treatment."

"Well now, boys," said Willie, after Mr. Pitt had gone on guard, I think it is my time to furnish something for the entertainment of the crowd this evening. Mr. Pitt has 'gone and done it again,'" said he, drawing a paper from his pocket. "I found this in my shot pouch to-day, where Mr. Pitt had no doubt put it by mistake, and as every thing in this camp is common property, if you all say so, I will read Mr. Pitt's verses to you."

Everybody except Uncle Seth wished to hear them, but he said nothing pro nor con, though it was very evident by the way he drew his blanket around him, and settled his head upon his saddle, that he did not expect much entertainment from the verses, and was fixing himself comfortably for a nap. In fact, as he said himself on a former occasion, he "didn't go high on any song ballads," in proof of which he was fast asleep before Willie had more than half finished reading "Prairie Scenes," as Mr. Pitt's verses were called:

"Slow wheeling from the realms of light,
The sun his broad, round disk displays,
And stretching far beyond the sight,
The treeless plains bask in his rays.
The prowling wolf, with stealthy tread,
Now seeks the canyon's rocky maze;
Yet often stops and turns his head,
With cautious backward look to gaze.

"With heads erect, and flowing manes,
Proud in their native liberty,
A troop of horse now sweep the plains,
That tremble as they thunder by.
Uncurbed by bit, and riderless,
On, on they dash,—now halt, now fly,—
To where the grassy wilderness
Blends in the distance with the sky.

"The winds are hushed; the skies are clear—
Then, whence that deep and sullen roar,
Such as on stormy coasts we hear,
When breakers lash the rock-bound shore?
With rolling gate and frenzied haste,
They come, they come, a thousand score.
O'er all the wide, extended waste,
A living sea, the bisons pour.
Now to the left, now to the right,
As torrents rush from Alpine snows,
Strong and resistless in its flight,
The surging mass still onward goes.

"In vain, though swift, the bison flees.
With bended bow, or deadlier gun,
Their dark locks streaming in the breeze,
Their war plumes dancing in the sun,—
Upon their wild and foaming steeds,
That hard and fast behind them press,
Close follow, where the bison leads,
The warriors of the wilderness.

"But, herds and steeds, and dancing plumes,
Soon in the distance fade away,
And solitude again resumes
O'er all the boundless plains her sway;
Save where yon eagle wings his flight,
And rends the air with piercing scream,
No living form now greets the sight—
They've passed like pageants in a dream."

I might lengthen out my story considerably by describing the great buffalo hunt we had with the Choctaws on the head waters of the Llano and San Saba; how we feasted on fat ribs, humps and "marrow bones;" how we explored all that wild and picturesque country lying between those streams; how we encamped for several days at the old San Saba fort, and searched the hills and gulches around it closely, for some vestiges of that rich silver mine said to have been worked for many years in that vicinity, by the Spaniards—but without finding any trace of it; how we passed over from its head waters to the mouth of the stream, the beautiful valley of the San Saba, and how at length we parted from our Indian friends and allies, the Choctaws, and took our way homewards, to the great joy of Cudjo, who longed to get back once more to the corn shuckings and camp-meetings of the settlements. But all this would be necessarily to a considerable extent, a mere repitition of what has already been told.

Our Indian friends were very sorry to part with us, particularly with Cudjo, who had risen vastly in their estimation since our fight with the Comanches. Big Drunk told him when he bid him good-bye, that if he would go with him to his village, he would give him "plenty land and tree wife." "I much 'bliged to you, Mass Big Drunk," said Cudjo, "I like mity well to hab some land fur taters en peas en watermillions, but I got one wife now and dat's more'n I kin see to." Nearly all the Choctaws gave him some little present when they parted from him, and he had his own horse and the pack mule pretty well loaded with moccasins, powder horns, shot pouches, beaver skins, etc.

In about a week after separating from our Choctaws, and after several narrow escapes from Comanche war parties, we reached Frontier Hall safely, to the great joy of Col. and Mrs. Rivers.

As my young friends may wish to know the subsequent fate of those mentioned in this true story of the exploring expedition, I will briefly state all I know about them at this day. Mr. Pitt not long after our return died prematurely whilst on a visit to his native State—Kentucky—a victim to the hereditary enemy of his family, consumption. Two years ago, I met with Lawrence (now an old bachelor) at the city of Houston, and from him I learned the subsequent fate of the others. Uncle Seth, he told me, remained on his little ranch for about a year after our return from the exploring expedition, but the country around him was then settling rapidly and he grew more and more discontented with the condition of affairs until the new comers crowded upon him so much he could stand it no longer. "Why, sir," said he to him, "it does beat all natur, the way the people is flocking into this neck of woods. Last week a feller squatted down not more'n two miles from my ranch, and yistidy, while I was layin' in bed, I hearn his old Shanghai rooster crow as plain as you kin hear me talk now; and what's wurs nor all that," he continued, "I'm told that two er three dozen of his uncles, aunts and cousins are goin' to move into the neighborhood next fall, but," he added, "I shall be off somewhere certin afore they git here and fence up; as it is I can't ride now five miles any way without meetin' somebody, and purty soon I s'pose the whole country will be in a work with people jest like a ants' nest when you stir it up with a stick." "And in fact," said Lawrence, "a few weeks afterwards, Uncle Seth rode over to Frontier Hall with his rifle on his shoulder and his traveling accoutrements strapped to his saddle, to bid us good bye, as he said he was off for California. He staid with us that night and left the next morning, and that," said Lawrence, "was the last I ever saw or heard of Uncle Seth, until a short time ago, when I met a gentleman from California, who told me he saw him in the mines at Roaring camp, where he was digging gold and occasionally varying the monotony of such a life with a scrimmage with Indians and grizzlies."

"Henry, poor fellow," continued Lawrence, "was killed at the bloody battle of Chickamagua, whilst charging the enemy at the head of his company. Willie," he said, "came safely through the war, and married as soon as it was over, and is now living on his ranch not far from Frontier Hall, and is likely soon to become one of the 'cattle kings' of Texas. Cudjo," continued Lawrence, "is still living with my father. After the war, he was of course, like the other darkies left 'lord of himself,' but he wisely declined accepting that 'heritage of woe,' saying, 'he was jess as free as he wanted to be, and that he was nebber gwying to leave old Mass Rivers.' I don't think, however," said Lawrence, "that 'Mass Rivers' has been benefited much pecuniarily by this determination of Cudjo, nevertheless, he was a faithful servant in times gone by and my father is much attached to him. Nothing," said Lawrence, "delights Cudjo more, than to take a seat under a spreading live oak of a summer evening with his corn cob pipe in full blast, and expatiate to an admiring crowd of darkies 'bout de great fight de 'splorers hab wid dem wile Comanche tother side de head ob de Frio,' and particularly of his own feats of prowess in that bloody engagement. With Cudjo that fight stands alone, 'of itself a thing apart, like Adam's recollection of his fall,' and it forms an epoch from which every event of his life is reckoned. Not a great while ago I heard some one ask him how long ago it was since a certain incident had occurred. 'Can't say adzactly, sah,' replied Cudjo, "but I believe it was 'bout a year afore de 'splorers hab dat big fight wid de Comanche tother side de Frio.' 'Why, what fight was that?' said his questioner, 'I have never seen anything about it in the papers?' 'May be so,' said Cudjo, "but dere's many tings you don't see nuffin of in de papers dat's so, and a good many you does see in 'em dat ain't so.' 'Likely enough,' said his questioner, 'but tell me how many Comanches did you fight on that occasion?' 'Bout five hundred,' said Cudjo. 'And how many of the Comanches did you kill?' 'I tink 'bout er hundred sah.' 'And how many did you kill yourself?' 'Don't know sah, adzactly, but I shoot fifty buck loads, into 'em, and nebber miss nary a time, sah.' "

FINIS.

APPENDIX.

Ll

co
na
in

n
o
C
s

T OF MEN UNDER THE COMMAND OF COL. J. W. FANNIN IN 1835—36.

Copy of the original list of the men in Col. J. W. Fannin's
nmand, original in the handwriting of Dr. Joseph H. Bar-
d, Assistant Surgeon of the Division, and now deposited
he Historical Department at Austin.]

'A list of the men under the command of Col. J. W. Fan-
, who were in the battle of *Encinal del Perdido* on the 9th
March, 1836, and of those under the command of Lieut.
l. Wm. Ward, who were with him at the battle of the *Mis-*
n del Refugio, March 13th, 1836.

J. W. Fannin, Colonel commanding,
William Ward, Lieutenant Colonel,
Warren Mitchell, Major "Georgia Battallion,"
Benj. C. Wallace, Major "Lafayette Battallion,"
—— Chadwick, Adjutant,
J. S. Brooks, Adjutant,
Gideon Rose, Sergeant Major,
David J. Holt, Quartermaster,
Joseph E. Field, Surgeon,
Joseph H. Barnard, Surgeon.

GEORGIA BATTALION.

Warren Mitchell, Major.

CAPT. KING'S COMPANY.

Aaron B. King, Captain,
Samuel Anderson, Sergeant,
Geo. W. Penny, Sergeant,
J. K. Callison, Sergeant,
Wm. R. Johnston, Sergeant.

J. C. Humphries,
J. C. Stewart,
L. G. H. Bracy,
James Henley,
Garvin H. Smith,
Benj. Oldum,
F. Davis,
Snead Ledbetter,
Joel Heth,
L. C. Gibbs,
H. H. Kirk,
T. Cooke,
Jackson Davis,
R. A. Toler,
Francis Dietrich,
J. Colegram,
Wm. S. Armstrong,
—— Johnson.

CAPT. BULLOCK'S COMPANY.

F. M. Hunt, First Sergeant,
Bradford Fowler, Second Sergeant,
Allison Arms, Third Sergeant,
Jas. B. Munson, First Corporal,
T. S. Freeman, Second Corporal,
S. T. Brown, Third Corporal,
G. M. Vigal, Fourth Corporal.

Joseph Andrews,
Wm. S. Butler,
George W. Cumming,
Isaac Aldridge,
J. H. Barnwell,
Wm. A. J. Brown,

Joseph Dennis,
—— Ellis,
—— Gibbs,
Saml. G. Hardaway,
John O. Moore,
John Moat,
L. T. Pease,
Austin Perkins,
John T. Spillers,
Thos. I. Smith,
Jas. A. Stovall,
Wm. L. Wilkerson,
—— Wood,
Moses Butler,
Michael Devreaux,
Chas. Fine,
Pierce Hammock,
Prury H. Minor,
Benj. H. Mordecai,
R. McKenzie,
Robt. A. Pace,
Saml. Rowe,
John S. Scully,
Thos. Stewart,
—— Tresevant,
—— Weeks,
Jas. McCay,
A. H. Osborne.*

CAPT. JAMES C. WINN'S COMPANY.

Wiley Hughes, First Lieutenant,
Daniel B. Brooks, Second Lieutenant,
Anthony Bates, First Sergeant,
John S. Thorn, Second Sergeant,
J. H. Callaghan, Third Sergeant,
Wesley Hughes, Fourth Sergeant,
John Gimble, First Corporal,
Walter M. Davis, Second Corporal,
Abraham Stevens, Third Corporal,
J. M. Powers, Fourth Corporal,
—— Ray, Corporal,

John Aldridge,
Michael Carroll,
John M. Bryson,
Thomas H. Corbys,

---

*Note—Osborne was wounded at the battle of the Mission and was left there. I believe he escaped.

John Ely,
Dominie Gallaglie,
Greer Lee,
Alexander J. Lovelady,
Aaron S. Mangum,
John M. Oliver,
William Parvin,
Anderson Ray,
William Shelton,
Christopher Winters,
Josias B. Beall,
Reason Banks,
George Eubanks
Nelson Helms,
Joseph Loving,
Martin Moran,
Watkins Nobles,
Patrick Osburn,
Gideon S. Ross,
Thomas Rumly,
James Smith,
Harrison Young,
John Bright,
H. Shultz.

CAPT. WARDSORTH'S COMPANY.

John B. Reese, First Lieutenant,
J. L. Wilson, Second Lieutenant,
S. A. J. Mays, Second Sergeant,
Samuel Wallace, Third Sergeant,
J. H. Neely, Fourth Sergeant,
James McSherry, First Corporal,
J. T. Brown, Second Corporal,
J. B. Murphy, Third Corporal,

George Rounds,
T. H. Barton,
W. J. Cawan,
J. A. Forster,
F. Gilkerson,
Thos. Horry,
Allen Ingram,
J. H. Moore,
M. K. Moses,
R. Slatter,
William Abercrombie,
J. H. Clark,
E. Durrain,
Joseph Gamble,
William Gilbert,
A. J. Hitchcock,
John P. C. Kennymore,
C. C. Milne,
J. B. Rodgers,
J. H. Sanders,

W. S. Turberville,
H. Rodgers.
E. Wingate,

CAPT. I. TICKNOR'S COMPANY.

Memory A. Tatom, First Lieutenant,
Wm. A. Smith, Second Lieutenant,
Edmund Patterson, First Sergeant,
Nicholas B. Waters, Second Sergeant,
Richard Rutledge, Third Sergeant,
Saml. C. Pittman, Fourth Sergeant.

Joseph B. Tatom,
Perry Reese,
Thomas Weston,
John McGowen,
Samuel Wood,
Isaac N. Wright,
Washington Mitchell,
Henry Harty,
Cornelius Rooney,
Cullen Canard,
Edward Fitzsimmons,
C. F. Hick,
Wm. Comstock,
Charles Lautz,
A. M. Lynch,
Layton Allen,
—— Swords,
Wm. P. B. Dubose.
James C. Jack,
Thomas Reeves,
D. Greene,
David Johnson,
William Welsh,
Wm. L. Alston,
Stephen Baker,
James A Bradford,
Seaborn A. Mills,
James O. Young,
Hezekiah Frost,
O. F. Leverett,
John O. Daniel,
Evans M. Thomas,
G. W. Carlisle,
Jesse Harms,
—— Williams,

LAFAYETTE BATTALION.

Benj. C. Wallace, Major.

CAPT. SHACKLEFORD'S COMPANY.

Jack Shackleford, Captain,
—— Francis, Second Lieutenant,
Fortunatus S. Shackleford, Orderly Sergeant,
J. D. Hamilton, Second Sergeant,
A. G. Foley, Third Sergeant,
T. M. Short, Fourth Sergeant,
H. H. Bentley, First Corporal,
D. Moore, Second Corporal,
J. H. Barkley, Third Corporal,
A. Winter, Fourth Corporal.

P. H. Anderson,
Z. M. Brooks,
E. Burbidge,
Wm. Bayhaye (deserted),
J. W. Cain,
Harvey Cox,
J. G. Coe,
S. Connor (lost on express)
G. L. Davis,
A. Dickson,
R. T. Davidson,
J. E. Ellis,
Robert Fenner,
James G. Ferguson,
M. C. Garner,
Wm. Gunter,
Wm. Hemphill,
John Jackson,
E. Ludington, (deserted)
John H. Miller,
J. E. Seaton,
Joseph Blackwell,
F. W. Burts,
J. N. Barnhill,
W. C. Douglass,
D. Cooper,
Seth Clark,
—— Cantwell,
Alfred Dorsey,
H. B. Day,
J. W. Duncan,
—— Derritt, (deserted)
Samuel Farney,
Joseph Fenner,
E. B. Franklin,
D. Gamble,
J. E. Grimes,
John Hyser,
John Kelly,
Daniel Murdock,
W. Simpson,
W. J. Shackleford,

B. Strunk,
James Vaughn,
Robert Wilson,
Wm. Quinn,
H. W. Jones,
F. W. Savage,
N. E. Vaughn,
James Wilder,
Henry L. Douglas.
John R. Jackson,

CAPT. DUNAL'S COMPANY.

B. H. Duval, Captain,
Samuel Wilson, First Lieutenant,
J. Q. Merrifield, Second Lieutenant,
G. W. Daniel, First Sergeant,
J. S. Bagley, Second Sergeant,
E. P. G. Chism, Third Sergeant,
N. Dickerson, Fourth Sergeant,
N. B. Hawkins, Corporal,
A. B. Williams, Corporal,
A. K. Lynd, Corporal,
R. C. Brashear, Corporal.

T. G. Allen,
J. F. Bellows,
Thos. S. Churchill,
John C. Duval,
John Donohoo,
John Holliday,
—— Johnson,
A. G. Lemond,
J. McDonald,
Harvey Martin,
R. R. Owens,
L S. Simpson,
C. B. Shaine,
J. M. Adams,
Wm. S. Carlson,
Wm. H. Cole,
H. W. Downman,
George Dyer,
C. R. Haskill,
Q. P. Kemps,
Wm. Mayer,
William Mason,
Robert Owens,
—— Sharpe,
—— Sanders,
L. Tilson,

B. W. Toliver,
John Van Bibber,
—— Batts,
Wm. Waggoner.
J. K. Volkner,
S. Van Bibber,
—— Woolrich,

CAPT. PETTUS' COMPANY.

—— Pettus, Captain,
John Grace, Lieutenant,
E. S. Heath, Sergeant,
Wm. L. Hunter, Sergeant,
—— James, Sergeant,
Samuel Riddel, Sergeant.

E. J. Carriere,
James P. Riddle,
George Green,
—— Holland,
Wm. G. Preusch,
Dennis Mahoney,
George M. Gilland,
David J. Jones,
Wm. Harper,
Edward Moody,
John Reece,
R. J. Scott,
W. P. Johnson,
—— Hodge,
—— West,
—— Perkins,
—— Logan,
Allen O. Kenney,
F. H. Gray,
Charles Sergeant,
—— Cozart,
John Wood,
Noah Dickinson,
George Noss,
—— Wallace,
Wm. Brenan,
—— Escott,
Manuel Carbajal,
—— Gould,
A. Bynum,
Chas. Phillips,
J. M. Cass,
Peter Griffin,
Milton Irish.

CAPT. BURKE'S COMPANY.

J. B. McMannony, First Lieutenant,
James Kelly, Orderly Sergeant,
H. D. Ripley, Sergeant,

Kneeland Taylor,
P. T. Kissam,
Orlando Wheeler,
Wm. Rosinberry,
Alvin C. White,
M. P. King,
Wm. P. Wood,
Peter Mattern,
Conrad Egenour,
Jos. H. Spohn,
N. J. Devenny,
Wm. Hunter,
S. M. Edwards,
A. Swords,
Charles Linley,
Randolph T. Spaine.

Chas. B. Jennings,
John Richards,
John D. Cunningham,
Wm. McMurray,
John Chew,
Jacob Colman,
Wm. Stephens,
Hermann Ehrenberg,
G. F. Courtman,
Thos. Kemp,
James Reid,
M. G. Frazier,
Wm. J. Green,
Z. O. Neil,
Wm. Gatlin,

CAPT. P. S. WYATT'S COMPANY.

B. T. Bradford, First Lieutenant,
Oliver Smith, Second Lieutenant,
Wm. Wallace, First Sergeant,
George Thayer, Second Sergeant,
Henry Wilkins, Third Sergeant,
J. D. Rains, Fourth Sergeant,
Oliver Brown, Quartermaster,
Peter Allen, Musician.

Bennett Butler,
Ewing Caruthers,
Perry Davis,
T. B. Frizel,
Edward Fuller,
H. G. Hudson,
John Lumkin,
—— Clennon,
Charles Patton,
Wm. R. Simpson,
Allen Wren,
F. Peterswitch,
James Hamilton.

Gabriel Bush,
N. Dembrinski,
Henry Dixon,
J. H. Fisher,
Frederick Gibenrath,
J. Korticky,
E. Nixon,
J. F. Morgan,
John R. Parker,
Frederick Leveman,
Wm. S. Parker,
E. D. Harrison,

REGULAR ARMY.

CAPT. WESTOVER'S COMPANY.

Ira Westover, Captain,
Lewis N. Gates, Second Lieutenant,
Wm. S. Brown, First Sergeant,
George McKnight, Second Sergeant,
John McGloin, Third Sergeant.

Augustus Baker,
John Cross,
Wm. Harris,
Dennis McGowan,
A. M. O'Boyle,
Thomas Quirk,
Thomas Smith, alias Abel Morgan,

Matthew Byrne,
John Fagan,
John Kelly,
Patrick Nevin,
George Pettick,
Edward Ryan,
E. J. A. Greynolds
Marion Betts,

Daniel Buckley,
G. W. Coglan,
Richard Disney,
Otis G. Eelles,
Robert English,
Wm. Hatfield,
Charles Jenson,
John Mumlin,
Sidney Smith,
Lewis Shatts,
Joseph W. Watson,
Wm. Winningham,
Mathew Conway,
George Dearick,
Andrew K. Eddy,
John Gleeson,
John Kitchard,
Wm. Mann,
Stephen Pierce,
Daniel Syers,
Charles Stewart,
James Webb,
Ant. Siley,
John James,

UNATTACHED.

Wm. Scurlock,
Daniel Murphy,
—— Bills,
John Williams,
Samuel Sprague,
James Pittman,
R. R. Petty,
Charles Heck,
G. W. Cash,
Wm. Haddon,
Francis Garcia,
Napoleon B. Williams,
Hughes Witt,
Thomas Dasher,
—— Duffield,
—— Spencer.
Nat. Hazen,
—— Hurst,
Capt. Dusanque,
Capt. Frazer,
—— Hughes,
C. Hardwick,
—— Jones,
Nat. R. Brister,
Erastus Yeamans,
Daniel Martindale,
Charles Smith,
Ransom O. Graves,
Lewis Powell,
George Pain,
John J. Hand,